

FROM FRIENDS TO ROMANTIC PARTNERS: AN EXPLORATION OF NON-ARRANGED
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT AMONG URBAN YOUNG ADULTS IN
INDIA

by

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Abstract

The majority of scholarship on romantic relationship development in emerging adulthood is with Western populations using theories grounded in a Western cultural context. This study had two goals. The first goal was to explore the experience of non-arranged romantic relationships for young people in urban India through in-depth interviews with four men and four women. The second was to examine the relevance of Western notions of emerging adulthood, romantic relationship development, and theoretical constructs related to relationship development (e.g., terms such as ‘dating’, ‘commitment’ and ‘satisfaction’) for this population. Findings indicated one potential pathway to relationship formation that begins in friendship and gradually evolves into a romantic relationship. Other findings shed light on young adults’ culturally bound negotiation with their families around the issue of romantic relationships and the similarities in definitions of relationship terms with Western literature. This study makes important contributions to the growing field of romantic relationships in emerging adulthood by suggesting that, first, while Indian youth display several characteristics of emerging adulthood and define commitment similarly as in the West, there are important differences too. Second it has implications for future quantitative measurement of romantic relationships among Indian young adults.

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Dedication

To my parents, without whose endless love and support, I would not be here pursuing my dreams.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

We live in an increasingly globalized world where India constitutes 17.5% of the world population (Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, 2011). However, the majority of research on romantic relationship development among young adults has been conducted in the West. Socio-economic and cultural changes in India, spurred by globalization, have created more opportunities for young adults to postpone adult roles (e.g., marriage, having children) and to explore non-arranged, romantic relationships (Alexander, Garda, Kanade, Jejeebhoy & Ganatra, 2006). Arnett (2000) describes this stage of exploration and ambiguity prior to acquiring adult roles as emerging adulthood (spanning from roughly age 18- late twenties) and hypothesizes that it is becoming more prevalent in urban middle class populations in developing countries. Over the past decade, research in the U.S. has indicated that these emerging adult romantic relationships have an important impact on a variety of individual, mental health and relational outcomes (e.g., Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009), including the quality of future committed relationships (Overbeek, Stattin, Vermulst, Ha, & Engles, 2007). Despite the growing population of young adults in romantic, non-arranged relationships in India, there is little empirical literature exploring the nature and outcomes of these relationships.

It has been suggested by Western scholars that how dating is defined potentially impacts the prevalence rates and length of relationships reported across studies (Furman & Hand, 2006). I propose that since the study of non-arranged romantic relationships is relatively new in India, it is likely that prevalence rates of dating estimated through survey data are impacted by the way terms such as 'dating' are understood by Indian youth. A qualitative study then is particularly suited to generate knowledge about the commonly used terms to describe non-arranged romantic relationships and identify important areas for quantitative measurement.

The purpose of this qualitative study is two-fold: 1) to explore the pathways to formation, and progression of young adults' non-arranged romantic relationships in India and the influence of family and friends on the progression of those relationships and 2) to examine the applicability of the concept of emerging adulthood, relationship development theories such as the commitment model (Stanley & Markman, 1992), and terms such as 'dating', 'relationship satisfaction' and 'commitment' for understanding non-arranged, romantic relationships in India.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

India has traditionally been a collectivist society with arranged marriage being the dominant form of mate selection (Netting, 2010). Even now, 90-95% of marriages are parentally arranged (Uberoi, 2006 as cited in Netting, 2010). In the past, unsanctioned romantic relationships in Indian societies were considered to be stigmatizing and a threat to the family's social standing (Dhariwal & Connolly, 2013). Romantic partnerships were strongly discouraged with the threat of serious sanctions to young people, women especially, such as loss of reputation, parental violence and forced arranged marriage to someone other than the romantic partner (Alexander, Garda, Kanade, Jejeebhoy, & Ganatra, 2007). The onset of globalization, however, accompanied by rapid urbanization, economic growth and exposure to Western media, has had a transformative effect on societal norms for young Indians and their relationships (Hindin & Hindin, 2009). Theorists have observed a growing trend towards 'individualism' and "romantic love" in developing Asian countries such as India (Huang, 2005). For example, Dhariwal and Connolly (2013) found that Indian youth in Westernized contexts (e.g., studying in co-educational institutions and exposed to Western media) as compared to youths inhabiting more traditional contexts report greater perceived autonomy from their parents in partner choice, more romantic activities, consumption of Western media and cross-sex social networks. In addition, other factors such as the decreasing age for puberty and the increasing age at marriage have resulted in a greater number of young adults entering into 'dating' or non-arranged romantic and sexual relationships (Hindin & Hindin, 2009, p.97).

Arnett (2000) expects that urban youth from developing countries are more likely to experience emerging adulthood as compared to rural youth as their context supports delayed marriage, childbirth and a focus on educational and occupational contexts. In one of the earliest empirical investigations of emerging adulthood in India, it was found that while Indian urban college youths did in fact display characteristics of emerging adulthood such as displaying ambiguity about adulthood and being optimistic about their future as compared to that of their parent's, there was much variation between males and females and within students and non-students and not all aspects of emerging adulthood were evident (Seiter & Nelson, 2010). This study, however, did not explore the applicability of emerging adulthood to the behavior of Indian urban youth in non-arranged romantic relationships.

Further, with respect to the emerging adulthood, it can be argued that while this stage is thought to encompass individuals between ages 18 to 29, developmental characteristics and tasks will differ across this period too. In the first author's observations, Indian young adults that are employed and living at home are in a unique developmental phase as they have a steady source of income but few financial and other responsibilities. This could set up Indian young adults to particularly experience the 'in-between' feeling, characteristic of the emerging adulthood phase. Moreover, such a time period could potentially impact how relationships form and how they progress toward adult role transitions such as marriage. Previous Indian literature has predominantly examined romantic relationships among college age individuals and thus do not provide information about potential pathways to romantic relationship formation and progression and the language employed to describe such relationships among employed or post-college, middle-income urban youth.

As societies world-over are becoming more alike in their emphasis on individualistic values (e.g., personal autonomy) over collectivist values (e.g., allegiance to the family) through their exposure to global media and peer culture (Arnett, 2002, Dhariwal & Connolly, 2013, Larson, 2002). Arnett (2002) predicts that some youth in developing countries will construct either bi-cultural (maintaining a local identity alongside a global identity) or hybrid identities (combining elements of local and global culture in one identity) instead of acculturating completely into a global culture. This transformation of identities and blending of local and global values is likely to influence how emerging adults navigate their romantic relationships. For instance, traditionally, Indian families play a crucial role in mate selection and relationship formation in the arranged marriage process (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). Typically, family members identify and vet potential candidates for their children by matching individuals on contextual factors such as caste, age, physical appearance, financial status and family background with young adults having an equal or lesser say in the decision-making process (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane, 1990 as cited in Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). Involving families, seeking their approval and privileging contextual factors when young adults in India self-select partners, might reflect the construction of a hybrid identity. A qualitative study by Netting (2010) provided some evidence for this notion by indicating that young people are creating a third alternate path between the traditional paths of arranged and self-selected marriage. In this "hybrid system", young adults self-select partners, commit to them, and then approach parents

for permission and approval. If parental consent is not provided, these relationships are often terminated (Netting, 2010). Thus, it was a focus in this study to explore the extent to which young people negotiated with their families, sought their approval and valued contextual factors when they self-selected romantic partners.

Non-arranged Romantic Relationship Development in India

Although the study of non-arranged romantic relationships in India is quite new, a few studies provide estimates of the prevalence and correlates of sexual behavior among low-income populations (e.g., Alexander et al., 2007, Hindin, & Hindin, 2009, Sujay 2009). Alexander et al. (2006) indicated that despite stringent norms regulating female sexuality, it is clear that young men and women are not only able to have opposite-sex friends but are also able to form romantic partnerships with 17%-25% of rural and urban men and 5-8% women between the ages of 15-24 years reporting having a romantic partner. These romantic partnerships were typically characterized by physical intimacy which ranged from hand holding to sexual intercourse (Alexander et al., 2006). Similarly, Sujay (2009) surveyed 3,173 Indian college students and found that 32% of female and 54% of male students reported having a partner of the opposite sex.

In developed countries, partnering and pathways to family formation during emerging adulthood have become more diverse and ambiguous without a clear sense of progression (Sassler, 2010). In a recent review, Shulman and Connolly (2013) commented that while emerging adults are capable of engaging in committed relationships, many choose to have short-term casual encounters, fluctuate between relationships, or engage in non-committed relationships. There is some evidence to suggest that there may be multiple pathways to relationship formation among Indian youth as well. Abraham (2002) conducted a qualitative study of low-income, unmarried youth from an Indian city and found three types of relationships with opposite sex peers: 'bhai-behen' (platonic, brother-sister), 'true love' (romantic, sexual and long-term) and 'time-pass' (sexual and transitory) relationships.

Although multiple paths to romantic relationship formation of Indian youth may exist, one particular progression may be dominant. Alexander et al. (2006) found that a typical pattern among low-income, urban youths begins with one partner, most often the young man, expressing romantic interest, referred to as 'making a proposal', followed by an opposite-sex partner

‘receiving the proposal,’ followed by physical intimacy and sexual experience with that partner. This study also found that participants used a specific set of terms to describe romantic interactions such as ‘making a proposal,’ ‘giving a line’ (referring to flirting) and ‘loveship’ referring to romantic partnerships. A similar pattern of relationship formation was observed in a qualitative study of 30 college-age young adults where men and women met in diverse, often ‘accidental’ ways, the men stated their interest or the women helped create a context that helped them express their feelings, the women said ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and relationship formation followed (Gala & Kapadia, 2013). The studies above have been conducted primarily with high- risk populations or college students and as mentioned above do not provide information about non-arranged romantic relationship formation among employed young adults in their early or mid-twenties.

Conceptualizing Non-arranged Union Progression

Various conceptualizations of romantic relationship development have been offered in Western literature including interdependence theory, (e.g., Kelly & Thibaut, 1978), the investment model (e.g., Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998) and the commitment model (e.g., Stanley, & Rhoades, 2009). Interdependence theory (e.g., Kelly, 1979) suggests that persistence in a relationship is grounded in the level of dependence, or the extent to which individuals rely on the relationship for achieving a desired outcome. The investment model (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1998) expands the concept of interdependence, suggesting that the growth of commitment to a romantic partner or relationship is a function of the level of satisfaction in the relationship, the quality of alternatives and the level of investment in the relationship or the cost of losing the relationship. Stanley and colleagues (e.g., Stanley & Markman, 1992) synthesized these previous ideas by proposing two meta-constructs of commitment: dedication and constraint. Dedication commitment refers to long-term orientation and desire of an individual to invest in and improve the relationship whereas constraint commitment refers to the continuation of the relationship regardless of partners’ level of dedication to the relationship due to constraints such as social pressure and availability of attractive alternatives to the relationship (see Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2010).

Stanley and Rhoades (2009) suggest that attraction brings two people together which prompts them to spend more time with each other. As satisfaction in the relationship grows, an

emotional attachment is formed between the couple. This emotional attachment is accompanied by the development of anxiety about the potential loss of the partner. Subsequently, as partners assess the viability of the relationship and make decisions about the future and the relationship, commitment develops. The establishment and communication of commitment reduces partners' anxiety over loss of the relationship and brings security.

Stanley and Rhoades (2009) propose a low and high risk sequence through this relationship progression. In essence, they argue that in the presence of multiple, ambiguous pathways to relationship formation, young adults must consciously evaluate the consequences of each relationship transition (deciding versus sliding) to reduce their risks of accruing constraints (e.g., joint financial obligations, acquiring sexually transmitted diseases etc.), before they develop dedication to the relationship (Stanley & Rhoades, 2009). Lack of explicit and conscious commitment to the next stage of the relationship further places couples at a greater risk for relationship distress (Stanley, Rhoades & Markman 2006) by reducing their likelihood of engaging in pro-relationship behaviors congruent with that commitment. Thus, commitment is not only important in developing romantic attachment and subsequently “security” but is also strongly associated with overall relationship quality and stability (Stanley et al., 2010).

These theoretical notions may be particularly relevant for Indian young adults as there are no clearly prescribed templates for what “dating” is supposed to look like nor a socio-cultural context that readily supports exploration in non-arranged romantic relationships. Therefore, young adults might encounter various decision points and accompanying risks in the formation of non-arranged romantic relationships. Ignoring contextual factors such as religion in self-selecting partners could make them vulnerable to ostracization from family and forced termination of relationships; lack of adequate sex education and active decision-making around sexual intimacy could put them at risk for unwanted pregnancies, STDs and social stigma and previously failed “dating” relationships could make them less attractive in the arranged marriage process. Therefore, while there are advantages to self-selecting partners identified by young adults such as greater equality, intimacy and understanding (Netting, 2010), there are diverse risks too. The commitment model was, thus, identified as a guiding framework to understand how young adults navigate these risks and ambiguities and the impact of those on relationship quality and outcomes.

The Present Study

Given the large numbers of Indian youth entering non-arranged romantic relationships, large impact of romantic relationships formed in emerging adulthood on individual and relational outcomes (e.g., Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009) and dearth of scholarly literature on the subject, it is becoming increasingly important to gain more information about what the various pathways to non-arranged romantic relationship formation among young adults in India might be and the nature of these romantic relationships. The purpose of this qualitative study is twofold: First, to explore the pathways to formation, and progression of non-arranged romantic relationships and the influence of family, friends. The specific research questions consistent with this goal are 1) How do young adults in India enter or form a non-arranged romantic relationship? 2) What is the progression of these non-arranged romantic relationships? 3) What is the role of Indian family and peers across the various stages of romantic relationship development?

Second, to examine the applicability of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) and relationship development theories such as the commitment model (Stanley & Markman, 1992) and terms such as ‘dating’, ‘relationship satisfaction’ and ‘commitment’ for understanding non-arranged, romantic relationships in India. The specific research questions in line with this goal are, 4) What meaning do young adults in India make of specific constructs such as ‘dating’, ‘commitment’ and ‘relationship satisfaction’?, 5) Is emerging adulthood a useful developmental theory to describe Indian young adults?, 6) Are Western relationship development models such as the commitment model useful frameworks to understand non-arranged romantic relationship development among Indian young adults? I use the terms ‘young adult’, ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ to refer to individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 years. The term ‘young adult’ here does not refer to the developmental stage that is often thought to come after the emerging adulthood stage.

Chapter 3 - Methods

A phenomenological approach was used to capture the essence of how romantic relationships are experienced by Indian young adults. Phenomenological approaches are considered to be appropriate when seeking to understand several persons' shared experiences of a phenomenon in order to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the phenomena (Creswell, 1998, p. 60). According to Husserl, objects do not exist in the external world but rather are things that present themselves to the consciousness of individuals (as cited in Fouche, 1993). It is the way people perceive and interpret objects that gives them meaning. Therefore, 'reality' is considered to be a reflection of an individual's consciousness and a 'phenomenon' instead of being something built on hard facts (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenologists essentially seek to describe, as closely as possible, the phenomenon under study and how people generate complex meanings from simple 'everyday' and 'lived' experiences (Patton, 2002). The focus on subjective experiences, meaning-making and the insider's perspective makes the phenomenological framework a useful approach for exploring the largely unstudied phenomena of 'romantic love' and 'dating' relationships in India.

Participants and Recruitment

Since dating couples in India constitute a semi-underground population (Netting, 2010), non-probabilistic snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. Snowball sampling is considered suitable for recruiting participants from hidden populations or for sensitive issues where 'insiders' are needed to locate individuals for the study (Marshall, 1996). Populations are considered to be hidden when "size and boundaries of the population are unknown" (Heckathorn, 1997, p.174). As most studies of romantic relationships in India have been conducted with college-age students and prevalence rates of dating have not been widely established, it is difficult to reliably estimate the prevalence and characteristics of the dating population.

Friends and family of the first author referred persons that met the eligibility criteria; individuals who were between ages of 18 and 29, residents of Mumbai, India and currently in a 'dating' relationship. Upper middle class youth were selected as the target population since they are most likely to experience the context of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). In addition,

upper middle class youths are considered to be the most active agents of change as they have the most exposure to global culture and media (Netting, 2010). Mumbai, with a population of approximately 20.5 million, was selected as the research site as it is the biggest, most cosmopolitan metropolis of India. It is also the commercial capital and the wealthiest city of India. Thus, upper middle class youth in Mumbai, with their high access to global media and culture, inhabit a highly Westernized context. The findings of this study, therefore, are likely to be transferable only to youth in other large cities of India such as Delhi, Kolkatta or Bangalore,

Since this study seeks to understand how young adults make meaning of terms such as ‘dating,’ no explicit defining criteria was provided and individuals were allowed to self-identify as being in a ‘dating relationship’. Once an individual expressed interest in participating in the study, they were contacted via email or telephone to schedule an interview and sent an online questionnaire. Individuals known to the researcher were not included to enhance credibility of the study.

This study relies on a sample of four men and four women between the ages of 22 and 27 ($M = 24.63$ years) living in Mumbai, India and currently in dating relationships. Although a sample of 8 participants is small, empirical investigations have found that saturation is often reached with six to twelve participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Five participants had completed their Bachelor’s degree, two had a master’s degree and one obtained a professional diploma. The average relationship length was 2.08 years (range = 1.7-5 years). With respect to religion, three participants identified as Hindu, two as Christian, one as Muslim, and two did not identify with any religion. Six participants were employed full-time and two others were students. Pseudonyms were given to all participants to protect their identity.

Procedure

Intensive semi-structured interviews were used to invite participants to describe and reflect upon their experiences and understand individual interpretations of their experiences (Charmaz, 2006, p.25). All interviews were conducted between December, 2013 and April, 2014. Once participants were recruited, they were sent a link through Qualtrics, an online survey engine, to complete the informed consent, background information forms, and preliminary relationship questionnaire (presented in Appendix A). The preliminary relationship questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions corresponding to the four main research questions of

the study. The responses on this questionnaire were used to guide the probing and detail-oriented questions used during the interview. Once the online survey was completed, an interview was scheduled.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to direct the conversation (presented in Appendix B). Each broad open-ended question was accompanied by a list of specific probing questions. The same areas of inquiry were covered with each participant, however, the exact wording and sequence of the questions varied. If participants volunteered information not covered in the interview guide, those areas were pursued based on relevance to the research questions. The first two interviews were used to refine the overall interview structure and check for efficiency and redundancy of questions. Since major modifications to the interview guide were not made, the first two interviews were retained in the final sample. On average, the semi-structured interviews lasted for 60 minutes with the longest ones being 90 minutes and the shortest one being 30 minutes. All interviews, with the exception of one, were conducted over Skype from the homes of the researcher and the participant. The in-person interview was conducted in a private office in Mumbai, India. All interviews were audio recorded. At the final stage of data analysis, follow-up emails were sent to individual participants with questions based on emerging themes and requests for missing information.

Data Analysis

The final interviews were transcribed verbatim with the help of two undergraduate volunteers and double checked against the audio recordings by the first author. The words and non-verbal responses of the participants were captured as accurately as possible.

Data was analyzed using inductive analysis strategies. An inductive approach is considered most suitable when there is insufficient knowledge about the phenomenon under study or the knowledge is fragmented (Lauri & Kynga, 2005 as cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In addition, an inductive approach allows indigenous or unanticipated concepts to emerge from the data, privileges participant voices and attends to differing cultural realities. The goal of analysis was to understand and interpret how participants experienced and attributed meaning to their romantic relationships in their specific cultural context (Gilgun, 2005) without forcibly imposing Western theoretical concepts that may not apply. Specifically, the coding scheme described by Kathy Charmaz (2006), based on a social constructionist stance and grounded theory methods,

was used to analyze the data (p.43-71). According to Charmaz (2003, p.93), at least two coding phases are discernible in grounded theory methods, "an initial phase involving the naming of each line of data, followed by a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent earlier codes to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data" (as cited in Barnett, 2010). Thus, the first step was initial or line-by-line coding, where each line of written data was named (Glaser, 1978 as cited in Charmaz 2006). Line-by-line coding was used to generate as many codes as possible and develop initial themes.

The second step was focused coding and the development of themes where the initial codes were integrated into fewer codes to explain larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2006). In this phase, each transcript was analyzed individually and the identified themes were compared constantly between all transcripts until no new themes emerged (Charmaz, 2006). Constant comparison of themes was done in groups of same- gender transcripts and then the final themes were compared between all 8 transcripts. The coding process therefore was an evolving one where codes and themes were revised and modified based on reading and rereading of the data and constant comparison between data (Manning & Smock, 2005).

Ensuring trustworthiness

In order to enhance trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), several strategies such as researcher reflexivity and triangulation were used. Reflexivity refers to an "active form of self-reflection" (Gasson, 2004, p.93). Since the first author is a young adult raised in an Indian city, she is a member of the target population. Through memo- writing, the researcher kept track of what she 'knows' about dating relationships in India and how she 'knows' it in order to minimize subjectivity and bias related to the first author's 'insider' status. Triangulation of data sources, done by using online background and follow-up questionnaires in addition to interviews, allowed areas of convergence and divergence in the data to emerge (Thurmond, 2001). Triangulation of investigators, done by using co-analysts and a senior researcher to verify the coding scheme, served to reduce potential bias in coding and analyzing the data. Two co-analysts with an 'outsider' perspective were selected to balance the first author's 'insider' perspective. Each co-analyst was assigned one randomly selected transcript for verification. They coded the transcript independently and compared their codes with the coding

scheme of the first author. Identified discrepancies were discussed and modifications to the final coding scheme were made.

Chapter 4 - Results

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to explore the factors influencing the formation and progression of young adult non-arranged romantic relationships in India and to examine the applicability of Western concepts (such as emerging adulthood and relationship satisfaction) and relationship development theories (such as the commitment model; Stanley & Markman, 1992) to these relationships. Findings are organized in four main sections or categories: pre-relationship phase, relationship formation and progression, emerging adulthood, and meanings of romantic relationship terms. Each section has several themes and sub-themes within it. When seven out of eight or all participants mentioned a theme or sub-theme, I refer to it as ‘almost all participants’ or as a ‘dominant’ theme or sub-theme. If five or more participants mentioned a theme, I refer to it as a ‘main’ theme or sub-theme and if four or fewer participants mention a theme or sub-theme, I say ‘some’ participants.

Pre-relationship Phase

This qualitative study found one dominant pathway to relationship formation among urban, upper middle class Indian youths. This pathway begins with an extended period of getting-to-know and friendship which gradually evolves into a romantic relationship. Participants’ descriptions of this pre-relationship phase gave rise to five key themes: meeting sites, increased contact, developing friendship, assessment of fit, and intentionality.

Meeting sites

The young adults in this study met their partners in diverse ways. Three participants knew their partners through common friends, two through work; two met their partners in college, and one through a social networking site. It is interesting to note that none of the participants were actively seeking romantic partners when they met, the meetings were not engineered or planned and they met their partners outside their existing social circles or communities. This is in contrast to the study with low-income youths where participants largely formed relationships with peers from the same community (Alexander et al., 2006).

Increased contact

For the majority of participants, the initial meeting was followed by a period of increased contact through a variety of modes. Arjun, a 27 year old manager, who met his partner in MBA classes stated, “We started uh just randomly talking and uh texting each other or calling each other.” Similarly, Mihika, a 24 year old media professional described a gradual increase in socializing with her partner in the getting-to-know phase that included communicating over text and meeting in-person:

So uh we kept in touch for about six, eight months. Umm we used to like ... wish each other on the Diwali [Hindu festival] on birthdays and stuff like that. But then this uh one time umm...he made the effort to ... have a long conversation uh over BBM [Instant Messaging] and uh we were talking about, you know, new places opening up in Bandra where he stays. So I was like, ‘I would love to see uh and check out a nice restaurant there.’ So he's like, ‘Yeah let's meet for lunch.’ And that's when we fixed the first time where we actually went out together.

As young people were getting-to-know each other, they used all mediums of communication available to them including online texting, phone texting, calling and in-person meeting. For over half of the participants, the majority of communication occurred online or through phone texting. The rest relied primarily on meeting in-person. India experienced a telecommunication and information technology boom in the last few decades which made mobile phone technology accessible and affordable to people in the middle-income classes (Varma & Sasikumar, 2004). Since then, the use of smart phones and internet has only grown exponentially (Arthur, 2014). The heavy reliance on texting in relationship formation may point to the effects of such a shift.

Developing friendship

Almost all participants discussed a period of friendship in the pre-relationship phase. The increased contact described above seemed to be a part of the getting-to-know process which moved them towards building a platonic friendship. For instance, Shirin, a 27 year old journalist, described how the increased communication was an essential part of the growing friendship:

So when I started talking to this guy, we could pretty much talk about everything under the sun till there came a point where we were ...constantly chatting in and out...but even

then it was just friendship... from a strictly work relationship it sort of fructified into a friendship.

This period of friendship was marked by spending time together, sharing interests, confidences and an absence of physical intimacy. Varun, a 24 year old journalist, described the gradual evolution of his relationship from being acquaintances to good friends:

We had no idea that this would in any way evolve into um a romantic relationship of any sort. So largely we would just talk about you know random things that affect our lives like, 'oh my parents are such um, I don't know, so irritating!' ... It's just general things that uh two friends would talk about I guess. You know, 'oh check out this fun thing, oh it's international pie day today, do you read the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy?

For Aparna, an undergraduate student living in the U.S. at the time of relationship formation, a period of platonic friendship did not precede the dating relationship. She mentioned that *"then a couple of days later [after meeting the first time] he sent me a message asking if I wanted to have dinner and a movie."* This case did not follow the general pathway to relationship development that was apparent in other participants' experiences, potentially hinting at the multiple pathways of romantic relationship development that exist for urban Indian young adults. Aparna's experience was likely influenced by living in the U.S. on the east coast and studying at a large Ivy League University at the time she met her partner. Considering that 100,000 Indian students were documented to be studying in the U.S. in 2012-2013 (Clark, 2013), the influence of studying abroad on romantic relationship development for Indian young adults may not be an isolated case.

Assessment of fit

In contrast to the importance placed on contextual factors in the arranged marriage process; when asked to describe the factors that stood out to them about their partners, participants primarily identified individual characteristics. For instance, Aparna said, "the number one thing that did and still does attract me is that how genuine he is, so very few pretences or airs and a very down to earth sort of person which I really admire." Half of the participants talked about being physically attracted to their partners. This is illustrated by Mihika who explained that although they were friends for almost two years she had found her partner physically appealing from the beginning, "he was like the only eye candy on the floor (laugh)

so...I would look forward to meeting him.” Further, Johnathan qualified that for him, “the first time I saw her ... I was attracted to her, it wasn’t...it was about like eighty percent physical and about twenty percent...she kind of stood out for me from the other girls.” Two participants emphasized the ‘ability to have a conversation’ as being desirable trait in a partner and two others emphasized ‘intelligence.’ Some other personality traits that were valued were being “mature”, caring”, “ambitious”, “humorous”, “independent”, “simple” “grounded” etc. Although emphasis was placed on the individual characteristics of their partners, a few contextual factors were also considered. Some participants talked about income being an important factor to consider. For example, Varun explained that *“even before we started dating when she expressed that she might be interested in me ...I was quite scared that I would not ...be comfortable dating someone who was uh, you know so, so much higher on the socioeconomic scale.”* No participant mentioned caste as being an important contextual factor to consider. This could point to the dilution of the caste system and associated norms for marriage and romantic partnering in large urban cities such as Mumbai. Surprisingly, being from the same religion was mentioned as being important by only one participant. Shirin, a 27 year old journalist, qualified that further: *“so I'm Muslim and um he's also Muslim, though I'm a Sunni, he's Shi'a, which some would also regard as a big uh, you know, uh difference. But I don't know if, honestly, that was a factor to play initially.”*

Assessing or matching contextual factors was especially important at the level of family expectations or involvement. This is illustrated by Johnathan, a 24 year old IT professional, when he said that:

If we were fro(m) different income levels, I would probably consider that...not if she was from a lower earning income group, [but]if she was from a higher earning income group, then you know, I would think okay maybe the family will have issues with me or maybe I won't be able to meet their expectations.

Similarly, Aman described how language or ethnic differences between him and his partner were not important to him but would probably be significant to their families: *“but still with the family members and all, the language matters...for her family, they might have problem because I'm not from her ethnicity because hers is different from mine.”*

Sometimes participants considered fit with their friends or their partner’s friends in the assessment process. Mihika described assessing her partner’s friends when they were still in the

getting-to-know phase, *“So we met a lot and we got to know each other's friends and I think that's important... when you're dating someone, you need to also see what his friends are like.”*

Similarly, Aparna used her close friends to validate her judgment about her partner:

The third time we went out, I asked him, you know, to, to come hang out with my friends on campus, have a few drinks, and that-and after he did that and I saw that they got along umm I felt, I think, a little bit, uh, reassured.

The importance of compatibility emerged as a dominant sub-theme both in the getting-to-know stage and across the relationship. While compatibility in the arranged marriage process refers to a match between contextual and individual characteristics of potential partners, participants largely discussed a match between partners' personalities and expectations. For example, Arjun's described *“compatibility in terms of level of thinking, lifestyle, good looks, possibility of a permanent relationship.”* Johnathan's quote illustrates that compatibility with his partner was not only attractive but also cemented his desire to be in a relationship with his partner:

Once we became friends I realized we were really, really compatible at multiple levels and I'm not like a, you know, fling sort of guy. So,...I kind of was excited about the idea of being in a relationship with her because I could see some kind of, ah, long-term compatibility.

For some, compatibility reassured them about the long-term viability of the relationship. For example, Arjun mentioned that compatibility protected the relationship from conflict:

Both of us were, were on similar wavelengths in terms of, you know, thoughts about our relationship or your thoughts about going out or in, in general life so, which is why it was just not as turbulent as probably some of the other relationships that your friends might have gone through so. And, yeah and it's just nice.

Therefore it is possible that Indian youth do not assess the same contextual factors or place a similar level of importance on them in non-arranged romantic relationships as in the arranged marriage process. They do, however, seem to value compatibility which includes similarities in personalities, expectations, income and family background.

Intentionality

Participants varied in the degree to which they desired a romantic relationship with their “friend” and how intentional they were in the getting-to-know phase. Some participants used this phase to deliberately explore the possibility and viability of a romantic relationship. As Aman described the beginning of his relationship he explained that his partner wanted to get to know him before they could start dating:

I also asked her earlier that ‘see I have these feelings for you, whether it is ok with you or not?’ So she told me that, ‘this is not ok with me now because I don't know you’ basically....so she asked me she needed time.

Further, Arjun’s quote illustrates assessing compatibility as a prerequisite for moving towards relationship formation: *“once you sort of ticked off all the checkboxes and then decided if your chemistry matches with the other person..your frequency matches with the other person, so then we just, one of us ... asked just the other person out.”* In contrast, some participants did not describe any specific intention for a romantic relationship but a gradual evolution of a desire to date their “friend.” Varun, when describing how his relationship gradually progressed from being friends to best friends to dating partners, stated *“it just feels like like a very natural sort of progression.”* Therefore, for some it was the friendship that made them see their partner as a potential dating partner and for some the friendship was only a testing period.

Relationship Formation and Progression

Nine main themes were evident in the participants’ experiences of relationship formation (becoming a romantic couple) and progression (changes in the romantic relationship over time): transition to dating, increasing intimacy, decision-making, evolving expectations, cut-offs/breaks, open communication, self-growth in context of relationship, going public, and uncertainties in relationship outcomes.

The transition to dating

This theme encompasses events that shifted participants from friendship to a romantic or in-between phase. One traditional pathway to relationship formation described in Western literature, although becoming less prevalent, is where a young man asks a young woman, that he is romantically interested in, out on a date. For half of the participants, there was a clear

transitional event where one person “asked the other out.” This is evident in Mihika’s description of the turning point in her relationship:

He asked me and uh he made it really obvious. He said, "I would like to take you out for dinner." ...And then while at dinner, he, he told me that, you know, he had feelings for me and he wants to, you know, give it a shot.

In other cases, the ‘asking out’ involved a declaration of feelings and/or statements such as “I want to date you.” Aman recalled saying to his partner, “it is one year now, so you know me at least, so whether it is ok with you to begin in a relationship or not?” Interestingly, in all cases that involved a discrete transitional event, it was the male partners did the ‘asking out.’

For the other half, the transition from friendship/getting-to-know phase to a romantic relationship was fluid and did not involve an ‘asking out’ event. Shirin, for example, described her transitional moment as an unplanned declaration of feelings that made it clear that they were more than friends:

We were sitting in a car...we were hugging and...that's when he told me the first time that he likes me, which was almost a year since we first met. I was like, "Oh, really? You like me?" He said, "Yeah, I do." I'm like, "Ok, I like you too.

In a more extreme example, Arjun could not identify the moment when his relationship transitioned from friendship to dating, “one of us asked just the other person out I don't think it was a formal ask or else I would remembered so it was something I think that just happened over the course of time.”

Increasing intimacy

Following relationship formation moments, all participants described increased intimacy in their relationship through various types of relationship behaviors. Three central sub-themes within this larger theme of intimacy were identified: making room for the partner and/or the relationship in their life, evolving physical intimacy and traveling together.

Making room for the partner and/or the relationship in their life.

For most participants, a dominant feature of making room for each other was increased communication. Mihika highlighted this when she described the day after she agreed to enter a romantic relationship:

I remember the, the night after dinner uh R called me the next day. And that was like a thing that he started...which is if we didn't meet...during the day, he will definitely call in the night and catch up and ask about my day.

Other features of this period were spending increased time together and prioritizing the relationship. Shirin described:

Before this, it was mostly chats and telephone conversations. But after that, we started meeting a lot. So he would wait after work for me to get done and, like, we'd meet for an hour or so and we'd just meet and talk.

Similarly, Aman emphasized the need for making a romantic partner a priority: *"It is a change in your daily schedule ... because earlier I was in the same university, I don't have a relationship so I do other things. But when you come into a relationship, we need to give time to her."* A few participants indicated that they began to take their partner into consideration when making decisions. This was illustrated by Aparna who said that, *"when, when he was looking for houses post-graduation...he mentioned he was looking for an apartment close to my bus stop so I could come visit him that, that meant that, you know, he was taking me into consideration in his future."*

Evolving physical intimacy.

Along with growing connectedness, a progression of physical intimacy was also evident in the participants' experiences. As indicated by previous research, despite strict norms forbidding pre-marital sex and physical intimacy (Alexander et al., 2006), it is evident that Indian young adults do in fact engage in physical intimacy of various types. Participants were asked to describe the initiation and evolution of physical intimacy over the course of their relationship. While all participants were willing to talk about the development of physical intimacy in general, several participants elected to skip detailed questions about the extent of physical intimacy with their partners. Considering the forbidden nature of pre-marital sex, the reluctance to talk about it was not surprising.

Analysis of the data that was available indicated diversity around the timing and meaning of physical intimacy in the relationship. For instance, Johnathan and his partner experienced a phase of non-committed, sexual intimacy before becoming an "official" couple. He stated that *"uh in our case physical intimacy happened to be the first step."* For all other participants engaging in acts of physical intimacy, such as a kiss or sex, occurred after an understanding had

been reached about the state of the relationship or acted as a transitional event. Varun talked about how a kiss moved their relationship from friendship to an in-between phase where they had to decide the meaning and implications of the intimacy:

We um kissed...there wasn't a formal agreement on the fact that we are in a relationship, it was more a physical agreement...and then we were confused... for a week we were in this sort of indeterminate stage where we were both really sure of the fact that we like each other but we weren't sure of the fact that we are in a relationship.

Several participants implied that physical intimacy with their partners was not planned or intentional. This lack of active decision-making was seen predominantly around the issue of physical intimacy as compared to other turning points in the relationship. Varun, in his quote above, indicates that they did not talk or actively decide to kiss but once they did, it threw them in a state of confusion. Three other participants, as seen by the use of the phrase, “*it just happened,*” indicated similar ‘sliding’ in the initiation of physical intimacy. For instance Aparna described,

Uh, it just happened...I think I'd actually decided the opposite- not to let it happen so soon. Umm, just because we did feel very strongly about each other and so I didn't want to rush, I mean, that I already felt was moving very far. Uh but yeah, it just sort of happened.

Accordingly, the potential role of alcohol in the development of physical intimacy emerged from the experiences of a few participants. Johnathan described the first time he engaged in sexual intimacy with his partner, “*we got really drunk one night and ended up making out and getting physical with each other that night.*” Further, Varun talked about using alcohol to create a context in which physical intimacy such as a first kiss and relationship formation became possible. He stated:

We went to a mall and stuff and then mixed spiked you know drinks and then we like got drunk and uh then she said...do you want to probably try it out and I said...I think I like you but I'm really scared that you know I'll mess it up somehow...and then since we were drunk we just sort of went for it.

Alcohol in the above cases was perhaps used to overcome internal and external inhibitions about engaging in pre-marital physical intimacy.

The development of physical intimacy was also affected by the socio-cultural context in which the relationship was formed. As Aman described *“in our university it was not like Mumbai, because it’s a small town, all of them know us...there is no place of going to be physically intimate with each other... and physical intimacy...like holding each other’s hand, uh hugging each other is ok... But apart from this, it is not ok there.”*

Traveling together.

Another significant avenue through which participants experienced increased intimacy in their relationship was by traveling together. Almost all participants talked about taking trips together and most identified these as turning points in the relationship. For instance, Mihika illustrated, *“One turning point was when we took a vacation about a year ago together. I think we became uh more intimate and... reached another level of intimacy in our relationship cause we spent like a week together.”* Traveling together was part of the continual process of assessing compatibility, building intimacy and cementing the relationship. Shirin explained:

Traveling together, for me, is a litmus test to compatibility... Spending all your waking moments with a person, who you otherwise typically meet for coffee, movies and dinners...is a totally different experience! Sharing the bed, TV and toilet, planning the day’s activities, lazing around, talking and some more talking, moments of silence, him catching up with a sitcom on his laptop, me curling up in bed to read a book, walking up to a bar to chill over a few drinks — in everything we did while traveling, alone or together, told us that we could work!

As is evident from the above quote, most participants were restricted to public places for meeting and interacting with their partners. This creates a unique dilemma with respect to physical intimacy for young unmarried couples in India. Most young people live with their parents unless they move for education or employment. Since pre-marital physical intimacy is strongly discouraged and family homes in crowded cities like Mumbai are small, couples do not have access to private space. Further, public spaces, even in more progressive cities such as Mumbai, are subject to extreme moral policing, where young couples can be and often are harassed or arrested for displaying any type of physical intimacy such as hugging or kissing. Traveling together then, often clandestinely, is one way in which young couples can, not only assess the viability of their relationships, but also further their emotional and sexual intimacy.

Decision-making

A main theme noted within the larger category of relationship formation was that participants continued to assess fit of the relationship and make intentional decisions about continuing in the relationship as they did in the pre-relationship phase. This is in contrast to the lack of decision-making when initiating physical intimacy. For instance, Mihika described the differences she had with her partner over the future of their relationship. She would have liked to be moving towards marriage whereas he would not. She described the process of resolving this conflict internally, seeking input from friends and making a conscious decision:

I felt that in a couple of years I would have family pressure to settle down...get married...My parents, while they're very open-minded and would be ok with me getting married to anyone uh of my choice, I wasn't too sure if that's something that R wanted in the long term... But then I realize it doesn't matter. I'm in for the ride, like I'm happy. He's an extremely special person and we have a wonderful relationship. So I'm just taking each day as it comes. I thought about it a lot...And uh I spoke to a few friends...and made my decision."

Similarly, Shirin described her decision to terminate the relationship when her partner was uncertain about committing to it, *"if you cannot commit to something long-term now, then I would like to move on, however tough it would have been for me back then. I, I just thought that I had to take that decision then."*

Evolving expectations

Interestingly, most participants reported few or no expectations in the beginning of their romantic relationships. Almost all participants seemed to display an exploratory or 'wait and see' attitude and commitment was not a pre-requisite to entering the relationship. For instance, Aman explained that he had very few expectations in the beginning other than a desire to be with his partner:

We started dating very early. At that point of time I was only 18 and she was also 18 so we didn't think much about this. At that point of time we only want to be in a relationship... I don't think at that point of time what will be the future of this relationship or not.

Some participants verbalized only an expectation of exclusivity as they formalized the relationship. Johnathan mentioned, *“I think the only expectation once we became official was that we were exclusively committed to each other.”* Other participants talked about expectations of relationship behaviors such as being in regular contact, spending time together, meeting each other’s friends, and exchanging support.

Expectations seemed to grow and change as a function of the seriousness of the relationship. For example, Shirin’s quote indicates that while she did not have an expectation of marriage or long-term commitment in the beginning of the relationship, that expectation evolved as the relationship became more serious:

We did not enter the relationship with the idea that it has to turn into a marriage...I wanted to know him better you know from a guy friend to a partner. And after I thought he-he could be my partner, there could be something, I told him that from now if it has to go forward, I think I would need a long term commitment.

Similarly, some participants talked about growing expectations about relationship behaviors. Mihika mentioned:

I obviously didn't have any expectations like in the beginning. But after some time, I had expectations, expectations...that he should have the same feelings that I have for him uh he should be more expressive about his feelings... also expectations of getting to know each other's family so, over time those expectations have just, you know, evolved.

Cut-offs and breaks

As the relationship progressed, some participants described taking breaks or “cutting-off” and getting back together. For some “cutting off” was a way to evaluate the relationship and push it forward. This was evident in Shirin’s relationship:

Even as friends, I think I, I was just beginning to question...the absolute number of hours I was spending talking to this guy who I've only met twice in, you know, the past year why am I doing that... and this was not going anywhere so... I told him, "Listen, I don't know what this is, I just want like to have some space and you know just cut off for a while...and now it's a standing joke...we must have cut off at least four or five times.”

For others, a break was taken in response to conflict. Varun, when reflecting on a period of increased conflict in his relationship, explained, *“there were a couple of times when we*

discussed it and uh then we said that ... we're breaking up now and uh it used to last for about I think the longest one was about three days or four days." The breaks described above seem to be more about navigating relationship transitions than general instability. One participant's experience, however, was closer to the phenomenon of churning or cycling that has been described in Western literature (e.g., Halpern-Meekin, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2012). Although Vaishali identified herself as being in a 'dating' relationship, ambiguity about the relationship status and physical and emotional intimacy continued even when they were 'broken up.' She explained that *"We, we are not dating exactly right now but we do meet a lot. We, we don't know what's going to happen next, just waiting to see how things go and we don't repeat our mistakes again."*

Open communication

There was a universal emphasis placed on the importance of communication in navigating relationship transitions and resolving conflict. Almost all participants seemed to echo the belief that 'communication is the foundation of a healthy romantic relationship.' This is surprising as direct or open communication is not thought to be the dominant form of communication in collectivist societies (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin & Blue, 2003). For instance, Aman emphasized, *"talk to ... your partner frequently and ...tell everything to your partner because she is entitled to know everything because she's given her commitment to you."* Some participants relied on open communication to navigate certain barriers. For example, Aparna talked about navigating the issue of her partner being from Pakistan. India and Pakistan have a tense and violent history with citizens being heavily prejudiced towards each other, which made belonging to the two different countries a major challenge in the relationship, *"in the early stages we were a bit nervous about the relationship mostly because of the India Pakistan thing.... but after a few months you know we talked about it more openly and then um it was fine."* Other participants used open communication for making decisions about themselves and the future of their relationships. Shirin stated:

First talk everything out among ourselves and, you know, break down everything. What is it that we're looking [doing]? Are we talking marriage? Do we mean marriage by long term commitment? If yes, then when? If not, then what do we do now?

Open communication was also a big part of resolving conflict and repairing relationships by way of apologizing and talking through the conflict. Johnathan talked about using communication to resolve conflict sooner rather than later: *“in [the] past two years that we’ve been together, even if we have fought um, although that happens very rarely, but even when we do, we make sure we don’t...go to bed angry with each other.”*

Self-growth in context of the relationship

Almost all participants highlighted some aspect of self-growth including becoming mature, learning to manage expectations, and tolerating conflict and differences when asked to identify the most important lessons they had learned from their experience of being in a relationship. Mihika emphasized her own growth:

I have really grown up a lot in this relationship...what I've learned from this relationship is that you need to learn to give the other person space...yeah that's my first learning. The other is that people will not always be what you expect them to be... you need to be flexible. Otherwise...each day will be a disappointment.

This quote and the focus on self-development is representative of the lessons learned talked about by other participants. Another example of working on one self to reduce or manage conflict was discussed by Aparna:

I can't assume that because we're in a relationship and because we're committed to each other that I can just say whatever I want whenever I want...just learning to hold onto that thought and umm not giving to the impulse of just starting a fight or conversation. I think that takes patience and a lot of, a lot of, again learning and adjustment on my part.

The focus on self-development and growth in the context of romantic relationships is consistent with the expected characteristics of emerging adulthood.

Going public

This theme encompassed telling families and peers about romantic relationships and their influence on relationship formation and progression. Participants faced interesting challenges in telling their families about their relationships. With peers, however, the process of going public was far less complex.

Going public with peers.

Most participants talked about confiding in or seeking advice from their close friends over the course of their relationship. Aman described how his friends gave advice and supported him in his decision to pursue his partner despite the ethnic differences between them, *“So, there were few friends of mine, they were very close to me, I discussed with them what can we [do] done in this situation because I like her.”* Often peers did not have to be told explicitly about the relationship. For instance, Shirin said that even before they decided to tell their friends about their official couple status, their friends already suspected it:

Obviously your friends also know...because we're spending so much time with each other so um I just happened to be in his company and somebody calls me and then, "Oh, who are you with?" "Oh I'm with him." ...So it's, it's obviously our friends are gonna suspect it.

For some participants, telling a wider circle of friends was a reflection of the seriousness of the relationship. Johnathan explained that his close friends knew about them from the moment they became intimate, but they only told their extended social network once they felt more confident about their relationship: *“About four months later as soon as we called ourselves officially a couple was when we let just absolutely everyone know.”*

Going public with family.

Participants illustrated a complex negotiation with their families around the issue of romantic relationships. Four sub-themes were noted within this broader theme: simultaneous desire for autonomy in partner selection and desire for family approval, telling family reflects the stage of relationship, implicit versus explicit communication about romantic relationships, and integration with family.

A main issue visible in the negotiation with family was simultaneous and opposing desires for selecting partners on their own terms and for family approval. Johnathan verbalized the contradiction in these desires as he talked about how important it was that his partner got along with his family:

She does get along really well with my family ah, which is very important for me...I know my family is happy with her. Although even if they weren't, uh, I'd probably rebel with the family um, rather than give up the relationship. But, but yeah, I mean so it's very important that they're getting along well together.

For some participants receiving family approval validated their commitment while for others it was crucial for moving their relationship to the stage of marriage. Shirin described the process of convincing their families to overlook their religious differences and allow the marriage:

Both the families had this uh, the whole Sunni, Shia thing...it took me some time to convince uh my mom...because it's two major sects in Islam and all of that. So...that took a fair amount of timing and it was only as recent as about, say three months ago...when his uh family officially like sort of came over to my place.

For six participants, telling parents reflected the stage of the relationship they were in. However, the specific stage of relationship at which participants chose to reveal their relationships differed. For instance Aparna, who chose to tell her parents and sister early in her relationship, explained the significance of this telling, *"I told my family, I think, after the second or third date when I knew that, you know, he was someone I liked and that I knew he was going to be in my life um, you know, in the near future at least."* Similarly, Arjun described that telling his parents 1.5 years in was related to relationship progression, *"it was just going on to the next step so, you know, you talk to your parents at home and then see how things go and then tell them your interests for the other person."*

Some participants deliberately picked one family member to break the news to first. For three participants, the first family member was the mother. As Varun stated, he told his mother when he felt it was time to publicly acknowledge his relationship. She then relayed the information second hand to his father:

After I returned from Bangalore it was when I told my mom about the fact that I was in a relationship with her, yeah so uh I think that was the point when I decided that you know um I'm going to own up to this and be a little responsible.

In three cases, siblings were told first or knew about the relationship much before the parents did. Aman explained that when he did tell his family he would tell his brother first and rely on him for assistance, *"I will ask my brother to help in this."* Before families were explicitly told about the relationships, some participants used the label of 'friend' for their partners. Shirin explained that until she was ready to move her relationship to the stage of marriage, she denied anything more than friendship to her mother, *"she would ask me what's happening, who is he...do you like him? I said no, no, he's just a friend."*

In contrast to the open communication displayed in their relationships, participants indicated a great deal of implicit communication around the issue of romantic relationships with their families. Aman who hasn't yet formally told his parents about his relationship, described the implicit communication in their families:

My mom and dad came to know. But there's not, I haven't told them formally that, 'listen, this is it, I have decided this.' Same for her also; It was ok, they were ok with it. But uh...they're not explicitly telling this is ok but uh, I can understand with their expressions and all.

In some cases, the participants had explicitly told their family about the relationship but their partners hadn't. For instance, Johnathan mentioned that his partner's parents were still officially uninformed:

Her parents don't know we're together. As in they have an idea but they don't officially know that we're together. It's just that generation for her family. Like, her cousins, her brothers, and sisters, all them know we've take trips together and stuff, but it's the generation above that that's still in the dark.

In other cases, explicit communication only occurred with certain members of the family whereas there was silence around the issue with others. For instance, Varun described that, while both his mother and sister know of, and interact with his partner, his father is silent on the subject and this silence is assumed to be tacit approval:

My dad doesn't say anything at all...I've never formally spoken to him about it so um like I think he's aware of the fact that I am in a relationship with my girlfriend and...he doesn't really talk about it since I haven't really spoken to him about it. He's just, he just chills. He's chill about it I guess.

Despite the difficulties and ambiguities in communicating about their relationships with families, some participants talked about a gradual integration with each other's families. Three participants talked about meeting and socializing with their partner's families. Mihika described how she started meeting her partner's family a year into the relationship, "Uh he has met my mom a couple of times...and I've also met his parents at social get-togethers. But of late, uh I have started meeting his family like on a one on one basis." This integration, however, did not always include all family members or families of both partners. Mihika, further, highlighted this difference, "but he's not met my dad yet...meeting my dad would be like really big, big thing

because that would mean um a very big commitment.” For some, meeting families involved, as Arjun said, the “*intention to talk about marriage.*” For other participants, the integration involved ongoing meetings and did not have any associations with marriage, such as Johnathan who said:

She came home one night and uh, yeah, they got along well and, she comes quite often. She spends three or four days here a week...I've always been open with my family about these things so they knew but no special meeting was arranged.

Uncertainties in relationship outcomes

Although the majority of participants identified themselves to be in satisfied and stable stages in their relationship, they talked about uncertainties about outcomes of their relationships or potential obstacles for future stability due to external challenges such as family pressure/opposition and long distance and interpersonal challenges such as incompatibilities. Long distance emerged as a significant source of uncertainty for emerging adults. Six participants talked about distance related challenges in the past or in anticipation of the future and of these six, two participants were in long-distance relationships at the time of the study. Aparna verbalized the anxieties of being in a long-distance relationship where the outcome was uncertain:

I think the biggest challenge for us now is trying to plan a future when there are so many uh uncertain variables...we're planning uh as much as we can to be together come this August or September but you know we don't know if we're both going to be in graduate school in the same place, we don't know you know if that'll even work out for us.

Johnathan talked about the uncertainties created by the anticipation of long distance in the future:

Whether we were dating each other or just friends we've been together every single day and now...I'm giving the GMAT this year and she's planning on studying as well. So, it's a little daunting over there. We don't know how being apart will affect the relationship... we both have agreed that we want to try long distance but our idea of long distance is it generally doesn't work and it's a lot of emotional baggage to carry around.

The other major source of uncertainty was family pressure or opposition. While the majority of participants reported an active negotiation process with their families and no blanket

refusals about relationship continuance were received, these pressures created a great deal of uncertainty. Vaishali described:

Opposition from the family, yeah they tend to blame whatever wrong is happening in your life on the other person. I mean your own family does that. They tend to do that a lot out here. You know, if you fare bad in your studies or something, the blame automatically goes on them.

Aparna talked about the mix of support and pressure she received from her parents in her relationship with a Muslim partner:

Our parents...have also made things a little bit harder in that they've given us uh reasons to think more deeply about things we wouldn't have thought about. Umm so for example...the religion aspect matters a lot to his parents who would like me to convert, but my parents are or were very dead against that because they didn't see why somebody should have to change anything about themselves. So I think that, that was a big, major cause of uh for contention for a while.

Other uncertainties for participants came from differing ideas about marriage, individual goals and ambitions or unmatched contextual factors such as income. Varun illustrated the anxieties of planning the future when financial backgrounds were not equal:

It's very difficult to predict [the future] like she wants to do a lot of things like travel the world and...try out other things or whatever and me doing those things is a little difficult considering...I can't really depend on you know uh any sort of financial help from my parents and uh considering I work in, in the media the money is not very forthcoming so I really doubt my ability to be able to do all the things that she will want to do so uh for me that's a constant doubt that I have to keep on you know thinking about.

Emerging adulthood

In line with Arnett's thesis, a goal of this study was to examine if participants displayed attitudes and behaviors that are characteristic of the developmental stage of emerging adulthood. Five main themes were identified as relevant to the exploration of this research question: limited dating experience, coordinating personal and career ambitions with the relationship, avoidance/delaying of marriage, desire for cohabitation, a focus on the 'self.'

Limited dating experience

A hallmark feature of emerging adulthood is exploratory behavior in romantic relationships and this was examined by obtaining information on dating histories. For a majority of participants, their current relationship was their first “serious” relationship with four participants reporting that this was their first relationship ever. Of those that reported being in dating relationships in the past, most had 1-2 relationships. Therefore, while participants took an exploratory approach in their relationships, as mentioned above, they did not display exploratory behavior in general as seen by the overall low number of “casual” dating relationships.

Coordinating personal and career ambitions with the relationship

A major developmental task of emerging adulthood is making decisions in the areas of career and education and an associated challenge is to coordinate these individual life plans with romantic relationships (Shulaman & Connolly, 2013). This theme is clearly evident in all participants’ responses. Most participants were faced with the challenge of following their individual career and educational ambitions and balancing that with their committed relationships. The desire to fulfill their individual ambitions and the fear of losing the relationship was evident in Johnathan’s following quote:

I need to for sure study, she wants to you know live in another country for a year...and that has nothing to do with the relationship, it's just it's just other desires that each of us have from before we were together...So, our challenge now is to um you know do all of these other things while continue continuing to remain as committed as we are together.

Some participants were actively thinking of ways to coordinate their life plans so that they could be together. Mihika alluded to this when talking about her expectations for the future of this relationship, “*My only expectation at the moment is, which is unvoiced expectation, but I do plan to voice it when I get into a university of my choice, that uh I would, it would be great if R can move with me.*” For some, balancing work and relationships was not viewed as particularly challenging. Arjun talked about how his girlfriend’s move to a neighboring city for work did not really impact their relationship:

I don't think there [was] anything that we wanted to talk about or discuss specifically because...it was just that her job was in different city and then that was just a temporary stint because probably after a year, then she will be moving back probably so it was cool.

On the other hand, Vaishali, described the challenges of balancing competing demands of studies and relationships and her family's perceptions that her studies were suffering because of her relationships. She resolved these challenges by taking a "break" in the relationship: *"This phase, I would say, yeah it's giving us time to... think about right now... the focus is ourselves, our career, studies, work and all that stuff."* The emerging adults in this study discussed the challenges of balancing forming committed relationships and pursuing demanding careers as predicted by research literature on emerging adults.

Avoidance/delaying of marriage

Another dominant theme related to emerging adulthood was postponement or avoidance of marriage. It has been suggested by emerging adulthood theorists that emerging adults, raised in a Westernized context that values individualism, independence and self-expression, feel the urge to delay long-term commitments such as marriage until their own lives feel stable in the areas of work and finances (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). This was clearly visible in the responses of most participants. Shirin talked about the break they took in their relationship because her partner, while willing to be in committed relationship, was leery about committing to marriage. When describing the resolution of that break she said that:

But when he came back to me, he's like see this is what it is...it was never about doubting uh, doubting the fact that I want to be with you but it was more about just, you know, taking stock of my life and work and where I am right now.

Aman, when talking about the future of the relationship, hinted at the added responsibilities that come with marriage. He also echoed this notion of wanting to establish himself financially or build his own future before he felt ready for marriage,

We have time because we both don't want to... be in a marriage relationship now so we'll do it later on...so if I, I uh...find myself settled enough...that we can now carry on with our relationship in a formal way because with marriage uh different responsibilities also comes, right...and if we are settled then it's ok to get married.

Participants frequently used the term "settled" to talk about economic stability but also to talk about getting married.

The emphasis on establishing one's career before contemplating marriage, while consistent with emerging adulthood, is curious in the Indian context. Historically, marriage of

young people in India has been a family affair and financial responsibilities rested with the family and not with the young couple. This theme suggests a breakdown of the joint/extended family system where young people might be expected to be much more financially responsible than before and the growing trend of young couples living on their own instead of with their families.

Some participants talked about ambivalent feelings or a lack of faith in the institution of marriage, in themselves or their partners. In this sample, it was mostly men that had ambivalent/negative feelings about marriage. These ambivalent feelings were evident in Johnathan's position on marriage and commitment:

[I'm] not interested in uh breaking the relationship up at any point for sure, but we're also not looking at uh getting married any time soon. Um just because you know both of us you know look at marriage as...unnecessary and...there are other factors in there like we both want to study before you know we get married and stuff like so not looking at getting married in the next couple of years.

Similarly, Mihika described her partner's negative perception of marriage *"he doesn't have a good perception about marriage as an institution. Uh, he's committed, he's a very committed boyfriend and he's a very committed partner. I don't think he, he is looking to make that lifelong commitment."*

Participants, however, seemed to recognize the practical benefits of marriage or the lack of alternate options. Johnathan, in the follow-up survey mentioned that, *"[Marriage is] not a goal – just an eventuality – I think it brings some form of extra solidity to the relationship – it's also easier for society to swallow that way."* As illustrated in the above quote, some participants were moving towards marriage despite ambivalent feelings while one participant was hoping to avoid it all together. He stated although financial constraints made cohabitation (the preferred option) difficult, marriage is *"not currently, or hopefully ever, a goal."* It is possible that while many young people do not consider marriage a goal, it may be the only legitimate way to carry on a romantic relationship in their current context.

These findings, on the whole, were surprising and inconsistent with the results of Gala and Kapadia's qualitative study (2014). They found that, for approximately 77% of the emerging adults in their sample, marriage was a goal. These authors further found that, of those participants who did not desire marriage, most cited a lack of belief in the institution of marriage.

I speculate that this skepticism about marriage among young people in India may stem from the growing individualism in urban cities, lack of successful marriages as models, and a reaction to the historical lack of choice about getting married in general. For instance, Aparna implied that the reason she *did* believe in the institution of marriage was because *“I have very successful marriages around me in my family as role models and see it as companionship.”*

Desire for cohabitation

Since several participants expressed some degree of ambivalence about marriage, the follow-up surveys asked all participants if they would like to live with their partners and if this would be a step before marriage or as an alternate to marriage. Cohabitation in India, while legal, is still very rare (Lakshmi, 2010). Housing societies, even in urban cities like Mumbai, actively discourage unmarried couples from living together on grounds of morality (Lakshmi, 2010). Surprisingly, six participants expressed a desire for cohabitation and most identified it as a step before, or forerunner to, marriage. It is possible that young couples want the intimacy associated with living together without the responsibilities and social obligations associated with marriage.

Focus on the ‘self’

A main theme of being somewhat self-focused or focused on autonomy emerged, which is consistent with Arnett’s (2007) idea that emerging adults are faced with the task of self-development and consolidation of their adult identities (Levinson, 1978 as cited in Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Six participants described a desire to maintain their sense of self within the relationships and have some autonomy. Shirin said that, “I always wanted to be in a relationship with someone who... should just stand by me and you know and let me be the person that I am.” Similarly, Aman described a successful romantic relationship as one that afforded him some autonomy:

A successful romantic relationship...[is one] where there is no...burden of relationship like, you always have to be with your partner and there should be always time for your own friends. Because there's [your] own life...being in a relationship doesn't mean you've to always stay with your partner.

Some participants also described a desire for autonomy from their families. Varun said that he decided to be open with his family about his relationship so that he would not have to

justify his actions to anybody. *“And I’m like screw all that, you know, I’m going to do what I want to do and the only way to do it is to be um open about it.”*

Romantic Relationships Terminology

Crucial to the study of romantic relationships is defining the terms used commonly to describe such relationships. Moreover, before quantitative measures developed in a different country can be imported and utilized, the meaning attributed to the constructs under study need to be thoroughly investigated. This study, therefore, explored in-depth, the meanings attributed to 5 terms commonly utilized in the study of romantic relationships: dating, relationship, commitment, satisfaction, successful relationship, and simultaneously attended to terms that were indigenous to the data such as ‘being serious.’

First, it was clear that participants used a variety of terms and relationship statuses to refer to their relationships: “dating,” “seeing each other,” “going out,” “boyfriend-girlfriend,” “we’re a couple,” “became official,” and “committed.” Second, as expected, there were many areas of convergence and divergence in the use of these terms. “Dating” for instance had two dominant definitions. One definition referred to relationships that involved liking a partner and having the intention to explore or pursue a romantic relationship. Aman, for example, said that *“dating means in initial stage seeing each other to know each other well. It helps in establishing strong committed relationship.”* Dating was also defined as being brief, present-oriented, and casual. Varun stated that dating could also refer to *“an open relationship that can be nullified at any moment.”* Other participants echoed the notion that “dating” was no different from terms such as “relationship” and “committed relationship.” For example, Johnathan said:

For me dating and a relationship [are] the same thing... like I said I’m not the fling person where you just go out for dinner and then may go out again and then go home and maybe two weeks later you can throw it away...[so] to me, in my head, it’s the same thing.

Dating, although exploratory, did not seem to involve dating more than one person. For instance, Aparna described dating as two people that *“were mutually interested in pursuing a romantic relationship, had discussed their feelings for one another and decided to be exclusive.”* Although both “dating” and “relationship” referred to mutually exclusive relationships,

“relationship” was most frequently thought of as the more committed phase that followed dating. Its definition referred to being future-oriented and more “serious.”

There was a great deal of agreement on the definition of “commitment.” Most participants talked about commitment as planning for a joint future. Commitment was also characterized by being exclusive or monogamous in the relationship (mentioned by four participants) and having confidence in the relationship lasting or being right (mentioned by three participants). Commitment was often distinguished as being independent from the outcome of the relationships or marriage. For instance, Shirin said:

Now I don't know ten years from now what will happen, he doesn't know. But right now, for each of us to mutually feel that way, that feeling, that at this point of time in our lives we are committed to each other in the sense that we love each other. We will stand by each other come what may is what is commitment to me.

Only one participant used the term “commitment” interchangeably with marriage and another participant, Aman, qualified this idea by saying that “ *this is my one and only relationship, I'm ok with you now, and hopefully we'll go for the end of this relationship, wherever it is goes... in Indian context it ends with marriage, basically.* ” For Aman, commitment did not seem contingent on marriage but marriage was the inevitable destination based on their context.

“Being serious” about each other emerged as a potential alternative term to commitment. There was much less agreement, however, about what the term “serious” implied about the relationship. For some “being serious” implied having a future orientation and heading towards a long-term commitment such as marriage. For others, it implied more about the depth of feelings they had for each other or the attitude they had in the relationship than the outcome of the relationship.

Similar to the meanings attributed to “commitment,” “satisfaction” and “successful relationship” were both defined as being independent from relationship outcomes. Most participants identified success as what would be considered elements of a healthy relationship, such as communicating, actively resolving conflict, and exchanging support. Varun, for instance, defined a successful relationship as:

One where both people can see the possibility of being happy... it's very unlikely that two people like in whatever relationship they might be in will always be happy with each

other. So I guess it's just the fact that uh you know two people who can sort of set aside their differences and their uh problems or whatever and uh be in a place where they can sort of get over all this.

The definition of satisfaction emerged from their unique experiences of their relationship. For instance participants identified elements such as honesty, prioritizing the relationship, feeling accepted, and being oneself in the relationship as being satisfying. Johnathan defined satisfaction simply as;

I'm happy doing anything as long as she's doing it with me. Or, I'm happy you know just not doing anything and sitting on the sofa uh as long as she's sitting there with me and that... and I think that's why I know I'm satisfied with the relationship.

Therefore, it can be argued that while there are individual differences in the way relational terms such as dating and commitment are defined, there may not be marked differences between definitions among urban Indian emerging adults and Western emerging adults.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Although the multiple and ambiguous pathways taken by emerging adults towards romantic relationship formation have been well documented in the West (e.g., Shulman & Connolly, (2013), the same is not true for emerging adults in India. This study makes important contributions to the growing study of emerging adulthood and romantic relationships by shedding light on the pathways to romantic relationship formation and progression, influence of family and friends on relationship progression, utility of emerging adulthood and relationship development theories (such as the commitment model; Stanley & Markman, 1992) and the meaning of terms such as ‘dating’, ‘relationship satisfaction’ and ‘commitment’ among Indian young adults. Findings contribute several important insights into the nature of relationship development and have implications for the further study of such relationships.

First, with respect to non-arranged romantic relationship formation, results broadly suggest a common pathway which involves an extended getting-to-know period marked by platonic friendship and deliberate assessment of fit with partners. This pre-relationship phase is typically followed by gradual transitions into a romantic relationship and building of intimacy and commitment. This pathway is different from those identified in two previous Indian studies among adolescents and college students which involved meeting, declaration of feelings and/or the intent to form a relationship and acceptance or refusal of the ‘proposal’ (Alexander et al., 2006; Gala & Kapadia, 2013). Since the current study was conducted with an older sample in a different Indian city, differences in sample characteristics and socio-cultural context could explain the different pathways. Findings of this study add to the literature by indicating that there is at least one other pathway to relationship formation among Indian urban young adults.

Other potential pathways to relationship formation were highlighted by the two participants’ experiences that did not fit into the general pathway in terms of the getting-to-know phase and timing of physical intimacy. These cases suggest that some Indian young adults might begin their relationships with romantic intentions and by going on ‘dates’ or engaging in physical intimacy prior to the establishment of a commitment. The pathway of non-committal sex to relationship formation is in line with the results of another qualitative study which described young people engaging in transitory romantic relationships, referred to as “time pass” involving sexual behaviors without any emotional commitment (Abraham, 2002). Relationships described

in this previous study, however, referred more to young males pursuing female peers with the objective of having sex, than to consensual but non-committal sex among urban Indian youth. Findings of the present study highlight the need for research exploring the prevalence, nature and impact of non-committal or casual sex among Indian youth.

Results also have implications for mate selection in non-arranged romantic relationships. The data suggests that Indian urban young adults select romantic partners based on criteria that are important to them, such as personality characteristics and compatibility, as compared to criteria held by their families such as family background. This supports the idea that individualism and autonomy are growing among Indian urban youth (Huang, 2005). Findings also highlight the contradictions or tensions that exist between factors that are important to young people in selecting partners and the factors that might be important to families. These differing expectations would be important to consider in quantitative investigations of romantic relationship outcomes. Intentional decision-making in relationships is thought to reduce risks for future distress as the pathways toward family formation become more diverse (Stanley et al., 2006). In India, however, young people might enter romantic relationships by intentionally assessing criteria that are important to them but the relationship might still not be viable or successful because of differing family expectations.

Second, with respect to relationship progression and development of commitment, it was expected that due to greater barriers in and consequences of forming non-arranged romantic relationships, Indian young adults might begin their relationships with a long-term orientation and higher levels of commitment. The data suggests, however, a gradual development of emotional and physical intimacy, expectations and commitment. This gradual development of commitment is in line with the propositions of Western theories such as the commitment model (Stanley & Rhoades, 2009). According to Stanley et al. (2009), attraction and time spent together builds satisfaction which helps build emotional attachment. The exploratory pre-relationship phase found in the current study could be seen as the period where participants explored attraction, assessed compatibility and spent time together. As participants' satisfaction in the relationship and confidence in compatibility grew, so did their emotional attachment. Further, the results also highlighted the various decision points in the course of relationship development where young people had to assess the viability of the relationship and decide whether to continue or terminate the relationship. This active assessing of the viability of the

relationship by either telling family or matching one's own expectations to those of the partner seemed to build commitment and stability. This is consistent with Stanley et al.'s (2009) proposition that intentionally deciding to stay in a romantic relationship builds commitment and relationship quality.

Stanley and colleagues' meta-constructs of dedication and constraints, the two proposed components of commitment (Stanley & Markman, 1992), also provide a useful framework to understand the various risks and navigation of those risks by young adults in non-arranged romantic relationships. In some areas of the relationship, participants displayed active decision-making such as assessing compatibility in the pre-relationship phase, communicating commitment, coordinating life plans and telling families. On the other hand, there was a lack of intentionality or 'sliding' seen in the initiation and timing of physical intimacy. Accordingly, it can be speculated that couples that are friends before they become romantic partners may have an opportunity to develop dedication and actively decide about the viability of the relationship before constraints, such as physical intimacy and joint history, begin accumulating. Moreover, couples that demonstrate intentionality around issues of family approval might have better chances of continuing in the relationship. The concept of dedication among Indian young adults could also be hypothesized to include perception of compatibility or fit between partners, in addition to long-term orientation and prioritization of the relationship. Couples that demonstrate 'sliding' around issues of physical intimacy or marriage, before dedication commitment develops might be at greater risk for low quality or unstable relationships. Non-committal physical intimacy, particularly, might be a source of constraint commitment considering the norms and stigma around pre-marital sex and lack of adequate sex education. Similarly, couples that rely on alcohol to navigate relationship transitions or engage in intimacy might be at greater risk of constraint commitment.

Long distance relationships emerged as a significant issue facing participants. Young Indians inhabit a highly globalized context where immigrating to study or work abroad is common and desirable (Khadria, 2001) and there is a heavy emphasis on building lucrative careers for young men and women. Therefore, navigating the challenge of distance in romantic relationships may be common for young Indians. This was evident in that participants talked about the difficulties associated with being in a long-distance relationship but there was also a normative quality to the situation. Participants did not talk about breaking up preemptively or

moving along with their partners for the sake of the relationship. The impact of long distance on relationship quality and outcomes might be an increasingly important area of study.

Third, findings illustrated the complex negotiation between young adults and their families around the issue of romantic relationships. The often-delayed telling and implicit communication used with family, perhaps, points to the co-existing social realities in urban cities like Mumbai. Non-arranged romantic relationships are enjoying greater visibility and fewer restrictive social norms than ever before in contemporary India (Gala & Kapadia, 2014). Despite these changing social mores, however, there is still secrecy around these relationships and anxieties about family approval. Since many young adults live with their parents, they are not entirely financially independent and need their families' approval to move their relationships to the stage of marriage. The active efforts of young adults to integrate their partners with their families to assess and cement family approval also provide evidence for a desire to meld old traditions of families arranging marriages with the new individualistic values of self-selecting partners. These findings are consistent with the results of Netting (2010) which highlight the hybrid systems that young adults are creating by self-selecting romantic partners and seeking parental permission simultaneously. While previous literature has described the important role of families in non-arranged relationships, this study adds to this work by illustrating in detail the negotiation process that occurs with families.

Finally, exploration of relationship terms indicated that there weren't stark differences in meanings attributed to words such as "dating", "commitment", "satisfaction" and "successful relationship" by Indian young adults as compared to Western notions. This finding is not consistent with the findings of Alexander et al. (2007) who found that Indian young people use a distinct set of terms to describe their romantic relationships such as "making a proposal" and "loveship." It is likely that there are different subcultures around the norms of relationship development in different income groups and geographical areas in India. These differences would then reflect in the terminology used to describe the relationships. The similarity of meanings found in this study has implications for how dating relationships are measured quantitatively in India. Data indicates that surveys on the prevalence and characteristics of dating and current measures of relationship constructs and outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction and successful relationship may be able to capture the experiences of Indian urban young adults to a great extent. The diversity of terminology, however, as indicated by previous Indian studies

perhaps reflects the diversity of language used to describe romantic relationships and thus quantitative studies using measures directly imported and translated from the West may need to be screened for utility with Indian sub-populations before use.

The results of this study suggest that emerging adulthood might be a potentially useful theoretical framework for understanding the development of romantic relationships for young Indians in the ages between 18 and late twenties. Among the characteristics of emerging adulthood that participants displayed, the postponement of marriage was especially striking. It is possible that urban, employed, middle-income young adults might want to enjoy the benefits of a committed romantic relationship without the added responsibilities and family involvement that comes with marriage for as long as possible. This could be explained in the context of the other ‘in-between’ states they may be enjoying on account of their developmental stage, such as having an income but no major financial responsibilities and living at home with no major household responsibilities, etc. The delay of marriage is also striking since historically, marriage or the choice of life partner was not left up to Indian young adults. Therefore, while the postponement of marriage is expected within the framework of emerging adulthood, the meaning of this postponement might rest in the particular socio-cultural context of marriage.

Similarly, while cohabitation is not yet a realistic option for most young adults, the desire for it hints at the shifting social norms and expectations for romantic relationships. In the future, cohabitation and the decision-making around that might be an important area of study. Overall, in future research it would be important to examine not only the similarities and differences in the expression of this developmental stage among Indian young adults as compared to Western young adults, but also the unique risks for individual and relational adjustment that emerge from their particular socio-cultural and economic context.

Implications for Research and Practice

The findings provide some preliminary understanding of the development of non-arranged romantic relationships among urban young adults in India and various decision points Indian young adult couples may face in the progression of non-arranged romantic relationships. The potential for multiple ambiguous pathways, lack of decision-making around physical intimacy, role of alcohol, family opposition, long distance and developmental pressures to “settle down” are some of the myriad challenges that urban young Indians may face in forming and

maintaining non-arranged romantic relationships. Successful navigation of these challenges may include open communication with their partners, evaluating compatibility, and being thoughtful of family approval. Given these potential challenges and the impact of romantic relationships on individual and relational outcomes (Overbeek et al., 2007) there is a critical need for the development of a comprehensive theory of non-arranged, romantic relationship development. It would be important in future research to not only examine the risk and resiliency factors for Indian young adults in romantic relationships but also to develop an evolving theoretical framework for conceptualizing the potential developmental pathways that young adults' non-arranged romantic relationships in India may take and the decision making that determines that progression. A theory of non-arranged romantic relationship development that proposed high and low risk sequences of romantic relationship development among Indian young adults, akin Stanley and colleagues' commitment model (Stanley & Rhoades, 2009), could be used to understand how young adults are navigating risks in their relationships and the related consequences to relationship quality and individual outcomes. Accordingly, it would be important to assess the impact of those pathways on relationship quality and individual well-being. Finally, such theory development would have to be grounded in data from diverse samples of Indian urban young adults.

The results of the present study also suggest several implications for clinicians and family or relationship educators. Consistent with other Indian research that has emphasized the need for comprehensive sex education for young people (Alexander et al., 2007) the results of the present study also underscore the need for more education that promotes open communication between couples and among young individuals, in general, on issues of sexuality. Further, since there seems to be a deliberate compartmentalization of romantic relationships and family life, it would be useful to have educational programs directed at building communication between families and young people around mate selection and romantic relationships.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had several strengths. A small sample allowed for in-depth interviews and detailed follow-ups. Further, this study included both males and females and is one of the first studies using a non-undergraduate student sample. The site of the study, while limiting in many ways due to its size and somewhat unique socio-cultural context, is also a major strength.

Mumbai is a migrant city and therefore one of the most diverse with respect to ethnicity in the country. Thus, the present study had some diversity in the sample in terms of the states that participants' families originated from, languages spoken at home, religions followed and income classes (ranging from middle to upper middle class).

Several limitations are also worth noting. Although, there was a strong rationale for using snowball sampling given the uncertainties around the prevalence of romantic relationships and meanings of terms such as “dating,” this sampling strategy introduced several selection biases. First, since friends and family of the first author referred participants, it is possible that the sample was homogenous in certain demographic characteristics and similar to the first author. Second, the sampling strategy could explain why the sample primarily captured one pathway to relationship formation and progression while empirical and anecdotal evidence suggest that there are in fact multiple, and diverse, pathways to relationship development among Indian emerging adults (e.g., Abrahams, 2002). Third, since emerging adults were allowed to self-define their relational status as ‘dating’, there was one participant that was in an ambiguous romantic relationship and did not fit with the rest of the sample. Fourth, participants volunteered for this study. Thus it is likely that the sample only captured people in stable and satisfied relationships. Finally, although upper middle class youths living in Mumbai were deliberately defined as the target population, this demographic group itself is diverse. There are likely to be various subcultures within this demographic as defined by the religion, language and ethnicity of their family-of-origin, the type of higher educational institution they attended and their experiences with studying or working abroad. Thus, the results should be interpreted with caution even in the context of upper middle class youths living in Mumbai.

Conclusion

Given the increasing numbers of Indian youth engaging in non-arranged romantic relationships, the lack of socially sanctioned pathways to non-arranged committed relationship development and the dearth of scholarly literature on the subject; understanding how emerging adults navigate non-arranged relationship formation and progression is important to understanding potential risks and strengths associated with this emergent phenomenon. The present study, through the identification of a potentially dominant pathway to relationship formation, in-depth exploration of the expression of emerging adulthood and use of relationship

terminology, provides a foundation for future quantitative research on romantic relationship development among Indian young adults.

Chapter 6 - References

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Appendix A - Tables

Table 1: Coding Scheme

Category	Pre-relationship or Getting to Know phase
Theme	Meeting sites
Theme	Increased contact
Sub-Theme	Forms of communication
Theme	Developing friendship
Theme	Assessment of Fit
Sub-Theme	Individual characteristics
Sub-Theme	Assessing contextual factors
Sub-Theme	Assessing fit with friends
Sub-Theme	Compatibility
Theme	Intentionality
Category	Relationship Formation and Progression
Theme	Transition to dating
Theme	Increasing intimacy
Sub-Theme	Making room for the partner and/or the relationship in their life
Sub-Theme	Evolving physical intimacy
Sub-Theme	Traveling together
Theme	Decision-making
Theme	Evolving expectations
Theme	Cut-offs/breaks
Theme	Open communication
Sub-Theme	Navigating transitions
Sub-Theme	Resolving conflict
Theme	Self-growth in context of the relationship
Theme	Going Public
Sub-Theme	Going public with peers
Sub-Theme	Going public with family
Theme	Uncertainties in Relationship Outcomes
Sub-Theme	Long Distance
Sub-Theme	Family pressures/opposition and external pressures
Sub-Theme	Unmatched contextual factors/individual goals
Category	Emerging Adulthood
Theme	Limited dating experience
Theme	Coordinating personal and career ambitions with relationship
Theme	Avoidance/delaying of marriage
Theme	Desire for cohabitation
Theme	Focus on 'self'
Category	Relationship Terminology
Code	Dating
Code	Relationship
Code	Commitment
Code	Satisfaction
Code	Successful relationship
Code	Being serious

Appendix B - Interview Guide

RQ1) How do young adults make the decision to enter non-arranged romantic relationship?

Initial open-ended questions:

- Tell me about how you and your partner met? OR
- Tell me about, how you came to be in a relationship with your partner?

Follow-up Questions:

- Could you describe the events that led up to or preceded you entering the relationship?
- What characteristics of your partner stood out to you?
- What did you think then? What all did you think about/consider when deciding to enter into the relationship? (E.g. Individual characteristics of partner, developmental stage, level of liking/attraction, environmental factors such as SES, religion, caste, area of residence, employment status, family and peer expectations etc.)
- What was the process of making this decision? How did you come to this decision? (E.g. weighing pros and cons, talking to people, talking to you partner etc.)
- Who knew at that stage that you were considering a relationship with your partner? What contributed to you making the decision to enter this relationship? Who, if anyone, influenced your decision? Family member? Peers?
- What, if any, were the barriers to making this decision/entering this relationship?

RQ2) What is the progression of non-arranged romantic relationships?

Initial open-ended questions

- Once you made the decision to enter the relationship/ entered the relationship, what happened next? OR
- How did things proceed once you made the decision to enter this relationship?

Follow-up Questions:

- What were your expectations about the relationship at the beginning of your relationship? Where did you see your relationship going? How has the relationship developed with respect to those expectations? Has it been the same or different?
- As you look back on your relationship, what, if any, events stand out in your memory as being significant in your relationship? What, if any, were the turning points in your relationship?
- What, if any, decisions did you have to make about staying in the relationship? OR What, if any, decisions did you have to make about the development of your relationship?
- As you look back, what did you enjoy most about your relationship then?
- What, if any, were the challenges about being in this relationship?
- What is your opinion about engaging in physical intimacy in dating relationships?
- How has physical intimacy in your relationship changed since you first got together?
- How did you decide what physical intimacy would look like in your relationship
- How did you decide what the boundaries on it were?

RQ 3) What is the role of family and peers across the various stages of romantic relationship development?

Initial open-ended questions

- Who all have influenced your relationship? How have they influenced it?
- What has been their contribution (positive and negative) to the relationship? OR How have they influenced the relationship?

Follow-up Questions:

- Who, if anyone, did you tell about your relationship?
- What were the reactions of your friends and family? (Positive and Negative)

- What is the involvement of family and friends in your relationship? How do you feel about their involvement, if any? (E.g. desire involvement, do not want involvement, helpful, unhelpful)
- Who, if anyone, has been the most helpful to you over the course of your relationship?
- Who, if anyone, has made things difficult for you over the course of your relationship?

RQ 4) What meaning do young adults make of non-arranged romantic relationships and of specific constructs such as ‘dating’, ‘commitment’ and ‘relationship satisfaction’?

Initial open-ended questions

- How would you classify your relationship today? (E.g. casual dating, serious dating, committed etc.)
- Where do you see this relationship going? What do you think is the next step in this relationship?

Follow-up Questions:

- If you had to use a label to define your relationship or describe it in one word to a friend, what would it be?
- How has your relationship status/ relationship label changed since you first met?
- How did you know you were in a _____ relationship (E.g. dating and/or committed relationship)? What do the terms _____, ‘dating’ and ‘committed’ mean for you?
- What is the most important thing in your relationship? If you could change something about your relationship, what would it be?
- What are things you like or enjoy about your relationship now? How have these changed from before?
- How do you feel about your relationship now (E.g. happy, unhappy, satisfied, dissatisfied)
- What does satisfied/ dissatisfied mean for you? What in the relationship makes you satisfied/dissatisfied?
- How would you characterize a ‘successful’ romantic relationship? If you had to describe a ‘successful’ romantic relationship, what would you say?
- What, if any, are the challenges in your relationship now? How have these changed from before?

Ending Questions

- What have been the most important lessons you learned through this experience of being in a romantic relationship?
- Is there anything else that you think I should know to understand your experience in this relationship better?

Appendix C - Background Information Form and Relationship Questionnaire

Initials: _____

Date: _____

Your Background Information

1. Your age in years: _____

2. Your gender: _____ M _____ F _____

3. Current City of Residence: _____

4. Please check your highest level of education:

____ Primary School

____ Secondary School (did not graduate)

____ 10th Grade completed

____ Junior College/Pre-University

____ Bachelor's Degree (B.A., B.Sc, B.Com)

____ Professional Diploma

____ Master's degree

____ Doctoral degree

5. Please check the religion that you follow/identify with:

____ Hinduism

____ Islam

____ Christianity

Other (Please

____ Buddhism

____ Jainism

____ Sikhism

specify) _____

6. Your Mother Tongue: _____

7. The region/state your family originates from: _____

8. Please check your employment status:

____ Student

____ Employed full-time

____ Employed part-time

____ Self-employed

____ Not employed

9. If employed, Your Occupation: _____

10. Please check your monthly household income:

____ ≤ 24,000

____ 25,000 - 49,000

____ 50,000 - \$74,000

____ 75,000 – 1,00,000

____ >1,00,000

11. Please check your current living arrangement:

____ Living alone

____ Living with roommates/flatmates

____ Living in college dormitory/hostel

____ Living with parents

____ Living with partner

Other living arrangement (Please specify) _____

12. If living with parents, please check family members living in the home (Check all that apply):

____ Mother

____ Father

____ Brother (Please indicate No.) _____

____ Sister (Please indicate No.) _____

____ Paternal Grandmother

____ Paternal Grandfather

____ Maternal Grandmother

____ Maternal Grandfather

13. Please check your father's highest level of education:

____ No school/Illiterate

____ Primary School

____ Secondary School (did not graduate)

____ Bachelor's Degree (B.A., B.Sc, B.Com)

____ Professional Diploma

____ Master's degree

<input type="checkbox"/> 10 th Grade	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior College/Pre-University	

14. Please check your mother's highest level of education:

<input type="checkbox"/> No school/Illiterate	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree (B.A., B.Sc, B.Com)
<input type="checkbox"/> Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Diploma
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School (did not graduate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 th Grade	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior College/Pre-University	

15. Father's Occupation: _____

16. Mother's Occupation: _____

17. Type of parents' marriage:

<input type="checkbox"/> Arranged marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> Love marriage without parental approval
<input type="checkbox"/> Love marriage with parental approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>Please specify</i>): _____

Your Relationship History

18. Length of current dating relationship: ____ years ____ months

19. Age when dating relationship began: ____ years

20. Who in your family knows about your dating relationship (Please check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> Mother	<input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents
<input type="checkbox"/> Father	<input type="checkbox"/> Cousins
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Aunt(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Sister(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncle(s)

20. Number of dating relationships in the past: ____

21. The number of previous dating relationships that were serious: ____

22. The number of previous dating relationships that were known to family member(s): ____

Partner's Background Information

23. Partner's Age: _____

24. Partner's Gender: ____ M ____ F ____ Other

25. Partner's Current City of Residence: _____

26. Partner's highest level of education (*Please check*):

<input type="checkbox"/> Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree (B.A., B.Sc, B.Com)
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School (did not graduate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Diploma
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 th Grade completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior College/Pre-University	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctoral degree

27. The religion that your partner follows/identifies with (*Please check*):

<input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism	<input type="checkbox"/> Islam	<input type="checkbox"/> Christianity	Other (<i>Please specify</i>) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/> Jainism	<input type="checkbox"/> Sikhism	

28. Partner's Mother Tongue: _____

29. The region/state your partner's family originates from: _____

30. Partner's Employment Status (*Please check*):

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed
<input type="checkbox"/> Employed full-time	<input type="checkbox"/> Not employed
<input type="checkbox"/> Employed part-time	

31. If employed, Partner's Occupation: _____

32. Partner's monthly household income (Please check):

____ ≤ \$24,000

____ 75,000 – 1,00,000

____ 25,000 - 49,000

____ >1,00,000

____ 50,000 - \$74,000

33. Partner's current living arrangement (Please check):

____ Living alone

____ Living with parents

____ Living with roommates/flatmates

____ Living with you

____ Living in college dormitory/hostel

Other living arrangement (Please specify)

Relationship Questionnaire

The following questions ask you about how your relationship with your partner began and progressed. There is no right or wrong answer for these questions. Please take a moment to reflect and answer all the questions to the best of your capacity.

1. How did you and your partner meet?
2. What about your partner stood out to you? Or What made you consider a romantic relationship with him/her?
3. How did you decide to enter a relationship with your partner? What all factors did you consider?
4. List all the major events in your relationship since you first met until now?
5. Who among your family and friends has had the most influence on your relationship? How have they influenced your relationship?
6. If a friend said to you that he/she was 'dating' someone, how would you understand the word 'dating'?
7. If a friend said to you that he/she was 'committed relationship' with someone, how would you understand the words 'committed relationship'?

Appendix D - Sample Transcript

Interview 5
I1: Yes, go ahead
P1: Yeah. That works
I2: That works? Ok.
P1: Yeah. That works
I3: Alright. So um, M I was going over the survey that you filled out online and I saw that you mentioned that you actually met your partner at work?
P3: Yes.
I4: And you've been together for two years now?.
P4: That's right
I5: Ok. So could you tell me a little bit about the beginning phase of you know knowing him and your relationship?
P5: Yeah sure. So uh we met at my workplace...
I6: Mhm
P6: ...my first workplace. I was right out of college
I7: Mhm
P7: And uh he used to work there too
I8: Mhm
P8: That's where we got to know each other
I9: Ok
P9: So we had uh for one year we were just, we just used to have causal conversations near the water cooler, you know, about uh what did what did he do over the weekend or what are the nice restaurants to catch up on. We were not really friends, but we always used to say hi to each other.
I10: Mhmm
P10: Uh then after I left that place, that organization, because both he and I actually uh, now, when, when we started dating and we spoke about it, we both had this rule that we don't date anyone at the workplace.
I11: Ah ok
P11: Yeah? So uh it uh for obvious reasons
I12: Mhmm
P12: So after I left that organization we stayed in touch over uh you know, text messages
I13: Mhmm
P13: And that's when we started meeting for lunches and uh I think after meeting him for the first time, after two years of that did we actually go on a date
I14: Ok
P14: So we used to meet for lunches and we used to go out with other friends like a group of friends. We used to go partying or something. But we went on a proper date like only two years after we actually got to know each other.
I15: Oh, ok.
P15: Yeah.

I16: K. Um so you said, you know, the first year was really casual conversations and not - you weren't really friends but you always said "Hi?"
P16: Yes.
I17: So, when you say that, how would you sort of describe that period if in a few words like what was your relationship really like then?
P17: So he was - I, I used to work in this really boring place with super old, boring people. So he was like the only other young person that I could look forward to having a normal conversation with.
I18: Ok, mhmm.
P18: And he was like the only eye candy on the floor (laugh) so I was like I would look forward to meeting him
I19: Mhmm (laugh)
P19: But I, I also uh knew that, you know, there's nothing more. And also I knew that nothing more could happen to that for multiple reasons: One being the fact that he was in the same workplace
I20: Mhmm
P20: And I didn't want like overcomplicate things uh with someone at work. And also, uh both of us were in rival teams. So if I, if I spoke to him or he spoke to me, it was like a big deal for our team members.
I21: Mhmm ok so...
P21: So he, he was just someone I used to like look forward to seeing, you know, and smile and exchange smiles with.
I22: Ok. And then you describe that after you left the organization you stayed in touch. And used to meet for lunches. Can you tell me a little bit about that phase of your relationship, what that was like?
P22: Sure. So uh we kept in touch for about six, eight months. Umm we used to like, uh you know, wish each other on the Diwali on birthdays and stuff like that. And uh never really had a prolonged conversation like on BBM or anything of that sort. But then this uh one time umm actually I think uh R, that's my boyfriend he made the effort to uh, uh, have a long conversation uh over BBM and uh we were talking about, you know, new places opening up in Bandra where he stays. So uh I was like I, you know, at that point of time I stayed in south Bombay and I had not seen..much of Bandra. So I was like I would love to see uh and check out a nice restaurant there. So he's like, "Yeah let's meet for lunch." And that's when we fixed the first time where we actually went out together.
I23: Mhmm ok.
P23: But that was also very casual lunch. Uh there was nothing like a date about it. Uh we had a great time just, you know, and we got along really well. And uh then we fixed up over a period of about four to five months. Umm, uh, three, four outings where uh we went out with my friends and his friends and uh we went for a party, we went for a sundowner. So we met a lot and we got to know each other's friends and I think that's important because while uh like you know, when you're dating someone, you need to also see what his friends are like.
I24: Ok.
P24: Then uh because of my friend...So uh, uh I was single for a really long time and my best friend uh was trying to like, you know, she was just, she's, at that point of time she studied in New York. So she come back to vacation and she asked me, you know, "What's, what's the deal? Are you meeting anyone? Are you interested in anyone?" So I was like, "No, not really. There's nobody out there." And she was like, "What about R?" And I was like, "What about him?" And she's like, "You know, he seems like

someone you should date." And I was like, "No, I think he just wants to be friends.
I25: Ok.
P25: And so I don't think R really wanted to be friends, but he was just getting into the friend zone. And my friend, she had a chat with him like really casually. She's like, "I think you're getting into the friend zone." And that made him, like, you know, realize that that's what was happening and that's when he asked me out on a date.
I26: Oh, ok.
P26: Like a proper like a dinner date.
I27: And what were your thoughts and feelings about him at this stage when you were friends and you were hanging out more and meeting each other's friends?
P27: Oh I, honestly, wasn't sure because like I, I had a - when I like someone, I knew I liked them. Like I would be aggressive about it, you know. Uh stay in touch and try to make plans and I'm very vocal that way. If I like someone, I will tell them that I like them. But this was not really my comfort zone. This was out of my comfort zone because here was a friend of mine who possibly could have been someone more than a friend. I had never experienced that before. For me it was always that, ok, I like this person or he likes me and we can possibly go in that direction of like dating or something more and whereas with this guy, he was kind of my friend, not like my best friend, but like kind of my friend. And it was weird for me that, you know, uh I could possibly date him. But then I was very open about it because I was single and, you know, he's a really nice guy and I was like, "What's the harm? What could happen? What's the harm in trying it out?"
I28: Oh, ok. So how did you make this shift or how did you kind of decide to go on a date with him? What happened there for you?
P28: He asked me and uh he made it really obvious. He said, "I would like to take you out for dinner." And like, you know, he did it old school where he called me and he said, "I wanna, I wanna take you out for dinner." Like, like, like nowadays, most people uh, at least in my experience, most people are not very formal about this whole asking out thing anymore. It's like hey, uh we hung out with-like people will hang out for a couple of dates and then they will possibly start hooking up and then they, then they'll be like, "Oh yeah we're dating." That's how people do it. Like today (light laugh), right?. But R was very like old school about it where he said, "I want to take you out for dinner." And then while at dinner, he, he told me that, you know, he had feelings for me and he wants to, you know, give it a shot, and uh, you know, he asked me out and he did it very old school.
I29: Ok.
P29: So, how he did it and uh
I30: Ok. And when you say, you know, he took you out on a "proper date", what do you mean by that?
P30: Uh fine dining, flowers, uh, you know, yeah, yeah, that, that's what I mean, yeah like, like everything, like he set the tone for the evening.
I31: Ok
P31: Before, before that, uh before going out for dinner, he sent me like a couple of restaurant options to pick from, like a reservation. He picked me up, he dropped me. You know, he did all of that.
I32: Ok, so he went all out?
P32: Yes.
I33: Ok umm, and for you, you said, you know, you weren't sure because he was a friend and yet not.
P: Yes

I: So when he did ask you out, he said he wanted to give it a shot. Umm how did you decide about that whether you wanted to do the same?
P33: I had some mixed feelings. I definitely had mixed feelings because you're scared of like, you know, um it's, it's a commitment of sorts. It's not the biggest commitment, but it is a commitment of sorts. You, I was scared that it might not work out. Uh I was also scared that we might not be attracted to each other or we might not, you know, uh have the same person-like we might not have compatible personalities. But at the same time, uh I was willing to take the risk and I, you know, I said it's worth, worth the try. Like what's the worst that could happen? I'd be sad for a few months, that's about it.
I34: Ok. And when you say it was a commitment of sorts, could you tell me a little bit more about that?
P34: Yeah, uh sure. Like, first of all, uh, uh, when you said, when you say that yes you will date someone and you are their girlfriend, then they are your-and he's your boyfriend, then it means that, you know, you have to umm be monogamous first of all. That's the first commitment of sorts, right? You, you have to be with that person and give it a shot. The other commitment that comes with it is that uh you have to umm as a single person, your lifestyle is very different and as a person in a relationship, your lifestyle is very different. That's the second commitment. And in terms of, you know, uh the kind of social life you have or what your priorities would be as a single person are very different as your priorities as a person in a relationship. And uh the third is that you have to commit to making it work. You have to give it your best shot. And I think that's the, that's the biggest commitment, that emotional commitment. So while you will have a physical or a lifestyle commitment, the biggest is the emotional commitment because you have to put yourself out there and take the chance that ok I might fall in love and it'll be beautiful or it, I will hate this person and I will regret this (laugh).
I35: Ok, ok. Uh well thank you for sharing that. Umm I was wondering, so for you at that stage where he asked you out and I think he said he wanted to give it a shot, how did you understand him and these words he "wanted to give it a shot?" What was he talking about?
P35: So actually, uh he uh, he uh was very nervous before he said that and uh obviously he would be nervous because he wouldn't know what I would say. So umm I, I understood like he, he did say these exact words but he said something like, you know, he liked me and he, he wanted to take it to the next level and give it a shot and um what I understood was that uh he was putting his feelings out there, which I thought was very brave because uh in my experience, most men hesitate to put their feelings out there. So it is difficult for them to express themselves. And umm, at least uh, at least the men that I have met. For them it's just, so I, I thought that was brave on his part.
I36: Sure.
P36: Um and I, I understood that what he meant was that, you know, uh he wanted to make it official. So he wanted to make it an official relationship. That's what I understood.
I37: Ok. And when, when you say next level or official relationship, you mean?
P37: Uh like something uh...so, how, like when you start introducing the other person as your partner to your friends and your family
I38: Ok. Mhmm. Ok.
P38: And that is just the, like the uh tag that you give it. But there's so much that comes with it, you know? Which is a commitment that we spoke about a little while ago.
I39: Sure. Ok and when you say official relationship does it also mean what you talked about, which is calling each other girlfriend and boyfriend and it's monogamous?
P39: Yes, yes.

I40: Ok, ok. And if you had to give a label to that stage of your relationship, what label would you give it? Like if you had to use a word to describe it, one word.
P40: Uh when he asked me out?
I41: Mhmm
P41: Umm one word to describe it.
I42: In the sense that if I asked you or if a friend asked you what you and R were, how would you, what would you say to that?
P42: Uh just at that exact point of time when he asked me out or like when I said yes, I will go out with you?
I43: Uh either
P43: Oh, I would say that, you know, we're a couple.
I44: Ok mhmm
P44: But we're, no actually at that point of time when my friends were asking, I was like, "We're sort of a couple." 'Cause I wasn't too sure, it was too soon.
I45: Ok.
P45: Yeah, I was saying, "We're sort of a couple." (laugh)
I46: Ok and when you say you were sort of a couple, how would you understand that?
P46: No the deal is, I wasn't too sure because it was, it was so early, you know. Like I couldn't start telling people, "Oh I'm dating someone." And what if it didn't work out like in two weeks. (laugh) So I was just telling people for the first one month "we're sort of a couple."
I47: Ok.
P47: And then after a while when I realized that ok uh we're a couple then that's when I was saying, "we're a couple."
I48: Ok. Ok great. Ok.
P48: I have no idea what he was saying. (laugh)
I49: Ok and umm how did you communicate that you were interested in starting a relationship with him to him?
P49: Actually, I, I didn't communicate that. He asked me a lot of leading questions.
I50: Ok.
P50: So uh like I told you before, usually in all my relationships, or at least courtships, I have been very aggressive. But uh as things would work out in this-surprisingly in, in this relationship I wasn't aggressive in the beginning. So I never went and, you know, umm made the first move or I never said that oh hey uh I like you or we should get into a relationship. He asked me a lot of leading questions. So he asked me, "Are you seeing someone?"
I51: Ok.
P51: And I said - this is right at the beginning when we're just having lunches - and he's like, "Are you seeing someone?" And I said, "No, I'm not. What about you?" So I made it pretty obvious I was interested to know about his relationship status too.
I52: Right.
P52: And uh then he asked me uh what I thought like was, was I planning to get like, was, was, I looking to get into a relationship. And I said, "Yeah, if I meet the right kind of person. And then he asked me what kind of a person would I be looking for. And, and I remember when we were at dinner he asked me,

"What, what are your future plans for, what are your plans for you know, life? And uh what would you be looking for, you know, in a partner to possibly compliment those plans or help you with those plans?"
I53: Ok, ok. So how did you when you were sort of a couple or in a relationship, how-when did you know that and how did you know it?
P53: Mmm well umm I think I knew it one month after he asked me out.
I54: Ok.
P54: 'Cause we started hanging out a lot more. We uh were, we slowly got physically intimate. And I think post that, it was just obvious that we are really compatible and, you know, we get along really well.
I55: Ok, ok.
P55: And we started meeting each other's friends a lot more and it became like this - we started doing coupley things (laugh)
I56: Mhmm ok. And just going back a few minutes, you know, you said that he asked you and then you were kind of unsure. How did you say yes that you're willing to be in this relationship? Did you say it or did you not say it?
P56: I said, I said, "Yes. Like let's give it our best shot, you know. Let's try this out."
I57: Oh, ok. Ok
P57: Because I didn't want to tell him that I was unsure. It would just, you know, it's not fair. Don't start off something by being skeptical (laugh). It took, I mean I was skeptical, alright, but I didn't want to tell him that.
I58: Alright, and how, how long did you take to decide that you were willing?
P58: Oh, so I saw it coming the minute he told me he wants to take me out on a date. I knew that he was going to ask me out. And I mentally prepared myself. And then when he asked me over coffee after dinner was over, I just said yes.
I59: Oh, ok. Ok.
P59: But I was mentally prepared, like 'cause I, I figured this was gonna happen.
I60: Ok, so you had thought about it before?
P60: Yeah yeah I had thought about it before.
I61: Mhmm and...
P61: And if I was going to say no, I would have not gone on dinner with, on dinner with, with him, yeah.
I62: Mhmm um M, I think my voice is echoing um and that'll interfere with the recording, so I'm just gonna pause that (after pause). Ok so, you know, you said that you saw it coming and when he asked you on the date, so as you were thinking through, you know, about what your answer would be, how did you kind of decide? Did you go through some kind of process or..?
P62: Mmm well uh, obviously my mind was racing with all the things that could go wrong so the process actually was pretty much uh, in my head, was let's see how this works out in the short term and then reevaluate this in a month or two.
I63: Ok, ok. Would you say that this was a conscious decision or it just happened?
P63: To say yes to him? Or like to say that yeah, let's try this out?
I64: Mhm to enter this relationship.
P64: No it was a conscious decision. It, it definitely uh panned out in, like in its own way. It was a conscious decision, yeah.
I65: Ok um and at this stage, did you ask any family or friends or did you seek advice?

P65: Yes, I sook, uh I spoke to my best friend and my mom about it.
I66: Oh ok. And what was that like?
P66: Uh they both were very supportive and uh my best friend who had met my, uh who had met R actually uh really liked him and, you know, she gave her vote of confidence and she said that, you know, he's a really nice guy and I think you guys will get along really well and that, that, that was really comforting and uh when I, my mom had not met him at that point of time because she doesn't live in Bombay. So uh when I told uh her about him and I, you know, I explained what kind of a person he is and well how does he make me feel and all of that, she, she said, "I really like the sound of this guy and I think you should give it a shot.
I67: Ok and how did that influence your decision.
P67: Uh immensely because they are like the closest people in my life and uh any decision that is a big decision in my life about education, or career or, or you know, just some, some, you know, life kind of issue I always uh reach, reach out to them for advice. And, you know, their advice has always been really important to me. So it, it helped me decide.
I68: Oh it did? Ok.
P68: Yeah. A lot, it helped me decide a lot.
I69: Mhmm ok. And, you know, you had mentioned earlier when you worked at the same workplace that the barriers of kind of even thinking about a relationship were that you worked in the same place, you were on rival teams. At this stage when he asked you out, were there any barriers to making this decision?
P69: Uhh I was, umm, uh, how do I say? I was going on dates with this one other guy at that point of time. We were not in a relationship or anything, we were just like hanging out. So that would have been kind of a barrier. But then I realized because there was nothing official about it, and also R had asked me out uh for lunch and it was not a date or anything. So I thought about it for like a second but then I just like said big deal you know just a friendly lunch.
I70: Ok. So you mean?
P70: But that didn't work out
I71: Oh. Ok.
P71: Yeah.
I72: Ok. Alright. And then once you, you know, you said yes, let's give it a shot, how did things kind of proceed from then in your relationship?
P72: Uh we started hanging out a lot more and uh I remember the, the night after dinner. Uh R called me the next day. And that was like a thing that he started and, you know, established in our relationship, which is if we didn't meet the day, during the day, he will definitely call in the night and catch up and ask about my day.
I73: Ah ok mhmm.
P73: And he started texting me a lot more so we would like, which we still do, which is like we text through the day, you know.
I74: Ok, mhmm.
P74: And uh uh just small, small things that he would like say, "Good morning" and uh right when he woke up. Or, uh we would definitely plan to catch up every Saturday. Then I was moving apartments, so he was there and he was helping me move apartments.
I75: Ok, ok.
P75: Yeah.

I76: Ok great.
P76: And we started doing a lot of things together. Started spending more time together.
I77: Ok. And in this stage, what would you say your expectations were about this relationship right at the beginning?
P77: I honestly had no expectations.
I78: Ok.
P78: I honestly had no expectations at the beginning of the relationship.
I79: Ok and as it changed and evolved, have your expectations changed from then?
P79: Of course. Of course. My expectations have obviously evolved over time. At the beginning of the relationship, I had no expectations (laugh). But obviously over like six months I expected him to reciprocate of the, the feelings that I had for him. So you know, I uh I...
(Interruption in the room)
M: Hi. Just a second P, can you hold on for a minute?
I80: Sure mmmm.
P80: Ok. Ok. Sorry that was my flatmate.
I81: No problem.
P81: Uh ok, so uh I obviously didn't have any expectations like in the beginning. But after some time, I had expectations, expectations that, you know, uh, uh he, he should have the same feelings that I have for him uh he should be more expressive about his feelings, which is something that I think uh he wasn't in the beginning. But I'm really happy that he's worked on it uh over time and he's really expressive about his feelings now.
I82: Ok
P82: Uh also expectations of getting to know each other's family so, over time those expectations have just, you know, evolved.
I83: Sure.
P83: We, we've taken our time to if I've had an expectation from him, I've always told him about it.
I84: Mmmm
P84: And he's taken his time, like he's taken a good amount of time to work on it. But he's, he's come through
I85: Ok.
P85: Till now, he's come through.
I86: Oh ok.
P86: Yeah.
I87: And how far into the relationship would you say you had the expectation that we should start getting to know each other's families?
P87: Oh I think I had that expectation about uh six seven months ago. So a little more than a year into the relationship.
I88: Ok, ok. And as you look back on your relationship now, you said that you've been together for two years, right?
P88: Yes.
I89: Umm would you say that there were any turning points in your relationship where something really changed in any one direction?

P89: Mmm turning point in our relationship...I think uh, uh one turning point was when we took a vacation about a year ago together. I think we became uh more intimate and uh that, that we like reached another level of intimacy in our relationship cause we spent like a week together. Uh just the two of us. Then I think another turning point in our relationship was when uh R, R's grandmum passed away and he looked, like turned to me for comfort. And uh another turning point was when his best friends, two of his best friends who dated for ten years got married and unfortunately, after six months of marriage, their relationship didn't work out and then they, they, you know, filed for divorce. And that was a very troubling point for him and obviously he was conflicted. And someone like him, he's not very expressive but he expressed his feelings to me. So I think that was, again, a huge turning point in our relationship.
I90: Ok, ok. And at any point in this relationship did you feel that you had to umm make a decision about staying in the relationship?
P90: Uh yes, yes I did. Which was about uh seven, seven, eight months ago, I think.
I91: Ok, could you tell me a little bit about that?
P91: Uh, so, I, I felt that uh it wasn't going anywhere and uh I felt that in a couple of years I would have family pressure to settle down uh, you know, get married and uh, you know. My parents, while they're very open-minded and would be ok with me getting married to anyone uh of my choice, I wasn't too sure if that's something that R wanted in the long term. And uh, to be honest, I still don't know whether that's something he wants in his life whether he wants to, you know, settle down or get married or whatever. But then I realize it doesn't matter. I'm in for the ride, like I'm happy. He's an extremely special person and we have a wonderful relationship. So I'm just taking each day as it comes.
I92: Ok, ok. So how did you decide that you're just in for the ride and you're gonna take it as it comes? How did you make that shift for yourself?
P92: Well I thought about it a lot and uh over a, over a month, maybe more than a month. And uh I spoke to a few friends and, you know, and made my decision.
I93: Ok, so you, do you seek advice from friends would you say?
P93: Uhh yeah.
I94: Ok, ok. And how about your mother? Did you bring this up with her?
P94: (laugh) Yes, I did. So uh, in fact she just asked me like in December as to where, where were R and I headed and she's, so R's 28 and that's like marriageable age according to my mother (laugh). She was like, "Why is R not getting married? Is he ever going to ask you to marry him?" And I was like uh no, don't-like I, I just told her no. Uh, you know, I don't think that's, that's something we should depend or look, you know, expect from him at the moment. It's not fair.
I95: Ok mhmm.
P95: And she understood
I96: Ok, so you kind of spoke about it with your mom, but would you say you only sought advice from your friends?
P96: Uh no. I did talk to her about it, I said, you know, I don't think that, you know, uh R's ever going to make that kind of a commitment to anybody for, for, you know, just, lots of reasons that, you know, he's never seen or like people-he doesn't have a good perception about marriage as an institution like for him. Uh he's committed, he's a very committed boyfriend and he's a very committed partner. I don't think he, he is looking to make that lifelong commitment. So that's, that's the personal choice and I respect that and, you know, my mum and I spoke about it and uh I told her I think I need some more time. And she said ok I agree, we should, we should give him some more time. A year and a half into a relationship is too soon

to have any conversation about something like that. And I would hate to spring it on him like that, you know.
I97: Mhmm ok.
P97: It's not, it's too soon anyway.
I98: Ok, so umm, in general, how far into the relationship would you say it would be appropriate to talk about marriage?
P98: Three, four years.
I99: Ok.
P99: Depends again from at what, what situation you're in life. Like if both of you are done with your education and both of you are, you know, at the same point in your career because a lot of time careers can be consuming and that's not the right time to then settle down.
I100: Mhmm, mhmm ok. And what would you say, as of now, your expectations are about the future of your relationship?
P100: Uh I have no expectations.
I101: Ok.
P101: So uh about the future, so I'm planning to study next year. For a year, yeah. And my only expectation at the moment is, which is unvoiced expectation, but I do plan to voice it when I get into a university of my choice, that uh I would, it would be great if R can move with me.
I102: Ok. Mhmm. Ok.
P102: So, if I move to someplace and if he can also find a job there and stay with me, it'd be fantastic. But that's something I don't know. I have not discussed it with him yet. I'm waiting for the right time.
I103: Ok and umm, so you see this relationship continuing into the future then?
P103: Uh I hope so.
I104: Ok.
P104: I don't, I don't, I don't know. Let's see.
I105: And you mentioned sometime back that, you know, as your relationship has grown so has the physical intimacy and you also said that a turning point was when you traveled together and you became more intimate. Umm, if you are comfortable with it, could you tell me a little bit about how physical intimacy has changed in your relationship since you first got together?
P105: Uh I just feel that uh, you know, uh sex changes everything and uh you just become more intimate and it is uh, it makes the other person slightly more vulnerable and every, each, each person in the relationship lowers their guard and shares more of their feelings and their emotions. So I think that's, that's what it does and it's so, I think it just builds physical intimacy through uh the physical gratification of it and the emotional connect.
I106: Ok.
P106: And if human beings, are, if we are the only species who are monogamous, I can understand why because then you start longing for that person, you know.
I107: Ok, and how far into the relationship would you say um you and your partner engaged in physical intimacy, such as sex?
P107: Uh I think, uh a month and a half.
I108: Ok.
P108: A month and a half, two, yeah.

I109: Ok and how did that shift in your relationship where it happened where you took the step? Was that, how did it, how did it happen?
P109: It just happened.
I110: Ok.
P110: It was very unexpected. I did not see it coming, but it happened (laugh).
I111: Ok, so this was not a conscious decision on your part?
P111: No, no.
I112: Ok. Ok.
P112: But of course I saw it coming, like it had to happen sooner or later. The, the way it happened, it just happened.
I113: Ok. And since then, is this something that you guys talk about or you don't talk about it or how has that changed since then?
P113: Oh, like talk about that, like the first time? Or like just sex in general?
I114: Uh sex in general.
P114: Oh yeah, we talk about it.
I115: Mhmm and if you look back, would you say that your physical intimacy has changed in any way even since you had sex?
P115: Yes, definitely. Because in the beginning you're still trying to like, you know, get used to each other. And you're a little clumsy about it. But then over time, you know what the other person likes and what you guys, what all you're good at and, you know, how you can make things uh feisty or romantic or sweet and, you know. So you have each, each time is a different time. You get better with time.
I116: Ok, thank you for being so honest and frank about this piece. I know it can be really difficult for a lot of people to talk about it, ok.
P116: Well, that's ok. You're welcome.
I117: Umm, so if today you had to use a label to define your relationship, what label would you use?
P117: Umm, I would say that we are committed to making each other - okay, it's not a label, it's a really long sentence. Ok, yeah find, find a word, I have to find one, one word right?
I118: If somebody asked you today what R and you were, what would you say?
P118: I would say that we're partners.
I119: Ok, and when you say you're partners, what do you mean by that?
P119: I mean that we both are really committed to this relationship and we both want to, the other person to be, umm happy and, and, you know successful in whatever we do. So he's extremely supportive of all my choices. And so am I, I'm a very supportive girlfriend too. And there's so many times both of us talk to each other and we are each other's sounding boards. And that's how the relationship has progressed over time.
I120: Ok.
P120: So I would, he is now my go-to person and I am his go-to person.
I121: Ok, ok. And umm when you say we're really committed to this relationship, what do you mean by the word "committed"?
P121: Umm we, we make time for each other and umm we want, we look out for each other, we want each other's uh best uh we have each other's, you know, best interests in mind. We uh want we never want to hurt the other person. We will never do something spiteful.

I122: Ok, ok.
P122: And uh, yeah that's, that's what I mean. We have a really honest umm, good relationship.
I123: Mhmm ok. And umm does "committed" also mean anything about umm whether this is exclusive or umm not?
P123: Oh yeah, yeah, we're, we're absolutely exclusive.
I124: Ok, ok. Umm and when you say umm, you know, "committed to this relationship" if somebody said to you, that "I'm in a relationship with so and so," how would you understand the word "relationship"?
P124: Uh I would understand that umm they are uh, uh dating and uh if, I would also ask them how long have they been in a relationship. For example, if you said that you've been in a relationship for six months, I would realize that you're in the initial stages, so you are committed to each other. But you're still trying to like figure out what your chemistry is and what your long term plans are. I don't think that's something that's being considered. But if you said you were in a relationship with someone for the last five years, I would know that you're definitely much more involved in that relationship and it might be going somewhere.
I125: Ok uh and when you say "going somewhere" what do you mean by that?
P125: That uh could mean several things that people have been thinking about, you know, uh moving in together, or they might be thinking that if, if everything works out, we'll get engaged in a year or two.
I126: Ok.
P126: Or they might be thinking of getting married the next month. It just depends from relationship to relationship, person to person and the context of their relationship.
I127: Ok, ok great. Umm and if I asked you, you know, umm what does satisfaction in a relationship mean for you, what would you say?
P127: Oh uh I would say that, umm satisfaction in a relationship would be essentially that the other person has ability to make you happy and the only way they can make you happy is that - and you make them happy - equally happy is because both of you understand each other really well emotionally. You understand uh, uh, you understand expectations, such as social life expectations or emotional expectations, physical expectations. Uh and each, and both of you look out for each other and you're there and you're you know there for each other.
I128: Ok.
P128: I think a combination of all of that is, is essentially what makes a satisfying relationship.
I129: Ok and that is satisfying for you in your relationship?
P129: Yes.
I130: Ok and umm if I had to-if I asked you umm what a successful relationship looks like, what would you say and is that in any way different from what you just said for satisfaction?
P130: Uh, no I think they would kind-a successful relationship would lead to satisfaction in a relationship. But for me, the foundation of a successful successful relationship is communication.
I131: Ok, ok.
P131: And that's something that I'm really happy that both R and I agree on. So even he completely agrees that communication is the key for a successful relationship. So we have to, like if something bothers me, I cannot let it bottle up inside me and not talk to him about it. And we, we make a conscious effort to always share our feelings with each other and if we have any uh issues, we always talk it out and work it out.
I132: Ok, ok.

P132: Or at least try to. And it, it's ok if you agree to disagree, you know. It's just that you should know what you agree to disagree about.
I133: Sure mmmm. Umm are there any other characteristics in your mind uh of a successful relationship? You said the foundation is communication.
P133: Uh other characteristics of a successful relationship would be possibly umm mmm just uh regularity. I think uh consistency, not regularity, consistency. So consistency of, of everything. So of, uh like I, I know a lot of couples who are fantastic for like two months when they're together and then three months when they're not together, they're actually, just, they hate each other. And that inconsistency, I think, it does not make for a successful relationship.
I134: Ok, ok.
P134: You have to be consistent in your feelings and your expression and uh how you treat each other.
I135: Ok. Great, ok.
P135: And reliability, and reliability. The other person should be reliable
I136: Reliability. Mmmm ok. So communication, consistency, reliability. And when you say reliability, what do you mean M?
P136: Uh essentially, just uh that you can depend on that person to be there for you. So I could have a flat tire and I could call up R in the middle of the night or I could just be emotionally devastated because of some horrible day at work and call him up. And he would be there and I would be there for him too if he had any problems.
I137: Ok.
P137: Or something as simple as that you can-I can depend on him and he can depend on me to have- to spend Saturday night together.
I138: Mmmm, ok. Umm and I'd like to talk a little bit now about um, you know, what you mentioned a while ago, which was how you started kind of meeting each other's friends and getting to know each other's families
P138: Sure.
I139: And I was wondering umm how far into the relationship did you start telling people, telling your friends that you were in a relationship or were dating R?
P139: I think in a, a month into the relationship.
I140: Ok, month into it. And how did you decide that you would start telling them a month into the relationship?
P140: Umm I just knew because, you know, things were stable and we were getting along, getting along really well and it was uh it was, it was like the wonderful time of our relationship, so I, I knew that it was time to tell them.
I141: Ok, ok. Umm and did you sort of decide which friends you would tell or did you tell everybody?
P141: Sorry?
I142: Did you decide which friends you would tell or did you tell everybody?
P142: I uh in the beginning, of course, I started telling my close friends. But then over time, I pretty much tell everyone.
I143: Ok and when did you umm decide to tell everybody?
P143: If it ever came up in a conversation, that's when I would tell everyone.
I144: Ok. And umm you said that, you know, your best friend and mom umm knew right from the

beginning even when you were considering the relationship?
P144: Yeah.
I145: And your best friend was very supportive and so was your mom?
P145: Yeah.
I146: Umm did you talk- tell any other family members about this relationship?
P146: Yes, my sister, my dad, my brother-in-law. That's, that's, that's all my family anyway.
I147: Ok and umm how far into the relationship did you talk to them about it?
P147: Uh actually my mum told my dad.
I148: Ok.
P148: And my dad asked me about him, so I didn't technically tell my dad. But then we spoke about it, that was that. And I told my sister about six months into the relationship, I think.
I149: Ok and how did you decide to tell your sister at that point?
P149: Sorry?
I150: How did you decide to tell your sister at that point in the relationship?
P150: We were having lunch and that's when I told her.
I151: Ok. Was there, like, what made you tell your sister at that stage I guess is what I'm wondering?
P151: She was like asking me what's happening with you, why aren't you dating anyone. And I was like oh actually, I am.
I152: Oh, ok. Ok and um what was your dad's reaction to the relationship?
P152: Uh nothing oh significant. I think all he wanted to know was how long have I known him and if it's anything serious. And in my dad's dictionary, anything serious means should I start planning a wedding?
I153: Oh ok.
P153: I was like "No, it's nothing serious. Relax." (laugh)
I154: Ok, ok. So it was a brief conversation, then?
P154: Yeah, it was a brief conversation.
I155: Ok. And if you look back on your relationship, uh who would you say has been the most helpful to you over the course of this relationship?
P155: Uh, as in-ok. Uh who do I think has been most helpful? Uh.
I156: If anyone.
P156: I would, I would say it would be both my mum and my best friend.
I157: Ok.
P157: Yeah. They both have been equally helpful.
I158: Mhmm and I think I didn't ask you this before, but um when you did consult your mom when you were considering a relationship with him, how did you decide to share that with her?
P158: I said, "Mamma I met someone," and, you know, uh so my mom was really excited and she's like, "Who, who is it? Tell me more about him?" And then I told her about him and she said, "Ok, he sounds really nice," and uh and she said that "you should give it a shot."
I159: Ok.
P159: Should try it out.
I160: Ok and umm who, if anyone, has made things difficult for you over the course of this relationship?
P160: Difficult?
I161: Mhmm

P161: Uh no one, to be honest. No one has made it difficult.
I162: Ok.
P162: Yeah.
I163: Umm and also you mentioned that, you know, six months into the relationship, you had the expectation of getting to know each other's families, so I'm wondering-
P163: No, no, no not six months, six months not into-into the relationship. Six months ago
I164: Six months ago? Ok mhmm.
P164: Yeah, so a year and, a year and couple of months into the relationship.
I165: Ok and that's when you started meeting each other's families?
P165: Uh he has met my mom a couple of times, ok. And I've also met his parents at social get togethers. But of late, uh I have started meeting his family like on a one on one basis.
I166: Ok.
P166: So like doing umm movies together and dinners together and stuff like that.
I167: Ok. So and this started six months ago, correct?
P167: Uh, couple of-no a month ago, month and a half ago.
I168: A month ago. So how did you-
P168: He had met my mom uh about little more than a year-but he's not met my dad yet.
I169: Ok, ok. So how did you and R decide that you would start meeting his family or was that uh a decision?
P169: It was his decision completely. He did not consult me on it.
I170: Ok.
P170: But he just said, "Hey, like let's go watch a movie today. And my mom's gonna come."
I171: Ok.
P171: And then it was like, "Why don't you come home for dinner?" So I was like, "Oh, ok." And we had dinner with his family.
I172: Ok. And umm if you did decide to tell your dad, when do you think it would be?
P172: Uh tell my dad what?
I173: Uh or sorry, uh if you did decide to get R to meet your dad when, when do you think that would be?
P173: Whenever R's ready (laugh)
I174: Ok. And ready for?
P174: Ready to meet my dad.
I175: Ok.
P175: I don't want to, uh I have never asked him if uh-so my dad was in town. Uh my mom, dad were in town but umm we didn't plan a meeting.
I176: Ok.
P176: I didn't he was ready for it.
I177: Ok. And I'm wondering, like, if you can tell me a little bit more about this word "ready" and how you understand that?
P177: Uh what I understand is that um uh for him, meeting my dad would be like really big, big thing. Because that would mean um a very big commitment.
I178: Ok mhmm.
P178: And I don't think he's ready for that yet. What I mean by that is uh he's not emotionally uh ready to

make that commitment.
I179: OK mhmm.
P179: Which would possibly be a commitment in the short or the long-term future, especially getting like married. And we don't know whether we want to take that step, you know.
I180: Mhmm, mhmm sure. Umm when you met his family, uh his mom, and have you met anybody else from his-
P180: I've met his dad, I've met his sister.
I181: Ok. Would you say that that was different from him meeting your dad like is that-are they two different situations?
P181: Yes, yes, yes.
I182: Ok.
P182: Definitely.
I183: Mhmm. In what way would you say they're different?
P183: Uh I think his family would umm-his uh-my, my dad if I look at like our parents, uh his mom, my mom, his dad, my dad, I think my dad would be like the most conservative of the lot.
I184: Ok, mhmm. Ok.
P184: And also I think it's a little different for boys than girls like, like if a girl gets her boyfriend home, it will, it will, like the dad pretty much would be like, "What's uh, what's, what are your intentions, young man?" But I don't think like his dad would ever ask me that.
I185: Ok, ok. So would you say that you meeting his parents was not indicative of you making a commitment towards marriage?
P185: No, I don't think so. I, I don't think so.
I186: Ok. And you think that if he were to meet your father, it would be, you know, where you're ready to talk about marriage?
P186: Yes.
I187: Ok. Ok.
P187: Or the possibility of marriage.
I188: Ok. Mhmm. Alright um ok so I think um M, I have learned quite a bit from your experience today. I have one last question for you if you're willing?
P188: Yeah, tell me.
I189: Uh I was wondering, what would you say have been the most important lessons that you've learned through this experience of being in this relationship?
P189: I think um I have really grown up a lot in this relationship. Because uh, like I said, R is much older than me. Four years older to me. Men-and I've always dated guys who were my age, you know. And uh he is -and what I've learned form this relationship is that you need to learn to give the other person space, which typically when you're a teenager or, or you are dating people in college, you don't do that. So that's the first thing that I've learned, that you have to learn to give each other space, yeah that's my first learning. The other is that people will not always be what you expect them to be.
I190: Ok.
P190: And while it's not compromise that-ok you're not compromising onto your expectations. But you need to uh you need to be flexible. Otherwise you'll, you're-each day will be a disappointment. And uh lastly, I feel that if you, if you give it time, uh you can have a really wonderful time together.

I191: Ok.
P191: You just have to, you know, just give it time and it'll be-it's, it's actually a really fun ride.
I192: Mhmm, Ok, that's great. Um I really enjoyed talking to you today M and learning about your relationship. What was it like for you?
P192: It was, it was really uh interesting and I think uh it's the first time I've given so much thought to my relationship. And when you say things out loud, you realize how, how you've progressed.
I195: Sure. Uh do you have any questions for me?
P195: Uh ok yeah, actually uh if, if you're allowed to, but when you do publish your paper, do you think you could share it with me or are, are you allowed to share with your respondents?
I196: Yeah, yeah absolutely, absolutely. Um when, this is in a stage where the results have kind of been put together in a sort of composite fashion that uh all my participants will have the option to access those um findings. So they won't be about any one single participant, they'll be, you know, the common sort of results that we have found.
P196: That's awesome and how-what are you timelines? When are you expecting to kind of finish with everybody?
I197: Umm well I'm probably going to keep collecting data umm all through my spring semester and perhaps even summer so that's May June.
P197: Yeah.
I198: Umm and then it'll probably take until the end of the year to have it ready and I'm doing this as part of my thesis.
P198: And this is only for Indian couples, right?
I199: Yes, it's only for, well at least one person has to be Indian and uh a resident of an urban city in India, which would mean either Mumbai, Delhi, um Bangalore.
P199: Ok, that's pretty cool. Wish you all the luck.
I200: Thank you so much and umm I was wondering, is there anything that I didn't ask but should've asked to understand you relationship better?
P200: Mmm no, nothing comes to mind.
I201: Ok, great um and I also saw that you indicated on the survey that you would be willing to be contacted for further information. So would it be ok if I just emailed you if I had some clarifying questions about what we talked?
P201: Absolutely, absolutely.
I201: Ok, great. Um and M I also just wanted to ask you one more thing. Uh I was wondering if you knew any umm men between the ages of 18 to 29 who are in-who consider themselves to be in a dating relationship and would be willing to participate?
P201: Yes, I uh I'm guessing, uh R wouldn't, you wouldn't want to interview really 'cause you've already got already got the perspective on the relationship, right?
I202: Yeah, sure. I'm, yeah, I'm only taking one person from each relationship, yeah.
P202: So I have this colleague of mine S, ok. He's been in a relationship for the last five, six years. So I'll ask him uh my only worry is you'll have a tough time getting a hold of him to do this conversation.
I203: Aah ok.
P203: What I'll do is I'll talk to him.
I204: Ok, great. Yeah, if you can talk to him and maybe Whats App me his email address or, and/or

phone number, that would be great. And then-
P204: Yeah, I'll talk to him tomorrow. I'll talk to him tomorrow and it'd be great if you can drop me a Whats App just in case I forget.
I205: Yeah, yeah sure I'll remind you and-
P205: Or an email or whatever, whatever works.
I206: Yeah sure, and I really appreciate you taking the time out of your schedule and life like that to talk to me today.
P206: No worries. Sorry about last time.
I207: No, no worries on that. Alright
P207: Take care
I208: Well take care thank you so much.
P208: All the best
I209: Thank you, you too. Bye.
P209: Bye.